POEMS

MASEFIELD

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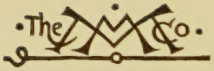
POEMS BY JOHN MASEFIELD



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POEMS

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

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A CONSECRATION

NOT of the princes and prelates with periwigged charioteers
Riding triumphantly laurelled to lap the fat of the years, —
Rather the scorned — the rejected — the men hemmed in with the spears;

The men of the tattered battalion which fights till it dies,
Dazed with the dust of the battle, the din and the cries,
The men with the broken heads and the blood running into their eyes.

Not the be-medalled Commander, beloved of the throne,
Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown,
But the lads who carried the koppie and cannot be known.

Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.

The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the clout,
The chantyman bent at the halliards putting a tune to the shout,
The drowsy man at the wheel and the tired lookout.

Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth; —
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of the earth!

THEIRS *be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold;*
Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold —

Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told.

AMEN.

THE EVERLASTING MERCY

From '41 to '51
I was my folk's contrary son;
I bit my father's hand right through
And broke my mother's heart in two.
I sometimes go without my dinner
Now that I know the times I've gi'n her.

From '51 to '61
I cut my teeth and took to fun.
I learned what not to be afraid of
And what stuff women's lips are made of;
I learned with what a rosy feeling
Good ale makes floors seem like the ceiling,
And how the moon gives shiny light
To lads as roll home singing by't.

My blood did leap, my flesh did revel,
Saul Kane was tokened to the devil.

From '61 to '67
I lived in disbelief of Heaven.
I drunk, I fought, I poached, I whored,
I did despite unto the Lord.
I cursed, 'would make a man look pale,
And nineteen times I went to gaol.

Now, friends, observe and look upon me,
Mark how the Lord took pity on me.
By Dead Man's Thorn, while setting wires,
Who should come up but Billy Myers,
A friend of mine, who used to be
As black a sprig of hell as me,
With whom I'd planned, to save encroachin',
Which fields and coverts each should poach in.
Now when he saw me set my snare,

He tells me "Get to hell from there.
This field is mine," he says, "by right;
If you poach here, there'll be a fight.
Out now," he says, "and leave your wire;
It's mine."

"It ain't."

"You put."

"You liar."

"You closhy put."
"You bloody liar."
"This is my field."
"This is my wire."
"I'm ruler here."
"You ain't."
"I am."
"I'll fight you for it."
"Right, by damn.
Not now, though, I've a-sprained my thumb,
We'll fight after the harvest hum.
And Silas Jones, that bookie wide,

Will make a purse five pounds a side."
Those were the words, that was the place
By which God brought me into grace.

On Wood Top Field the peewits go
Mewing and wheeling ever so;
And like the shaking of a timbrel
Cackles the laughter of the whimbrel.
In the old quarry-pit they say
Head-keeper Pike was made away.
He walks, head-keeper Pike, for harm,
He taps the windows of the farm;
The blood drips from his broken chin,
He taps and begs to be let in.
On Wood Top, nights, I've shaked to hark
The peewits wambling in the dark
Lest in the dark the old man might
Creep up to me to beg a light.

But Wood Top grass is short and sweet
And springy to a boxer's feet;

At harvest hum the moon so bright
Did shine on Wood Top for the fight.

When Bill was stripped down to his bends
I thought how long we two'd been friends,
And in my mind, about that wire,
I thought "He's right, I am a liar.
As sure as skilly's made in prison
The right to poach that copse is his'n.
I'll have no luck to-night," thinks I.
"I'm fighting to defend a lie.
And this moonshiny evening's fun
Is worse than aught I've ever done."
And thinking that way my heart bled so
I almost stept to Bill and said so.
And now Bill's dead I would be glad
If I could only think I had.
But no. I put the thought away
For fear of what my friends would say.

They'd backed me, see? O Lord, the sin
Done for the things there's money in.

The stakes were drove, the ropes were hitched,
Into the ring my hat I pitched.
My corner faced the Squire's park
Just where the fir trees make it dark;
The place where I begun poor Nell
Upon the woman's road to hell.
I thought of't, sitting in my corner
After the time-keep struck his warner
(Two brandy flasks, for fear of noise,
Clinked out the time to us two boys).
And while my seconds chafed and gloved me
I thought of Nell's eyes when she loved me,
And wondered how my tot would end,
First Nell cast off and now my friend;
And in the moonlight dim and wan
I knew quite well my luck was gone;

And looking round I felt a spite
At all who'd come to see me fight;
The five and forty human faces
Inflamed by drink and going to races,
Faces of men who'd never been
Merry or true or live or clean;
Who'd never felt the boxer's trim
Of brain divinely knit to limb,
Nor felt the whole live body go
One tingling health from top to toe;
Nor took a punch nor given a swing,
But just soaked deady round the ring
Until their brains and bloods were foul
Enough to make their throttles howl,
While we whom Jesus died to teach
Fought round on round, three minutes each.

And thinking that, you'll understand
I thought, "I'll go and take Bill's hand.

I'll up and say the fault was mine,
He shan't make play for these here swine."
And then I thought that that was silly,
They'd think I was afraid of Billy;
They'd think (I thought it, God forgive
me)
I funked the hiding Bill could give me.
And that thought made me mad and hot.
"Think that, will they? Well, they shall
not.
They shan't think that. I will not. I'm
Damned if I will. I will not."
Time!

From the beginning of the bout
My luck was gone, my hand was out.
Right from the start Bill called the play,
But I was quick and kept away
Till the fourth round, when work got mixed,
And then I knew Bill had me fixed.

My hand was out, why, Heaven knows;
Bill punched me when and where he chose.
Through two more rounds we quartered wide,
And all the time my hands seemed tied;
Bill punched me when and where he pleased.
The cheering from my backers eased,
But every punch I heard a yell
Of "That's the style, Bill, give him hell."
No one for me, but Jimmy's light
"Straight left! Straight left!" and "Watch
his right."

I don't know how a boxer goes
When all his body hums from blows;
I know I seemed to rock and spin,
I don't know how I saved my chin;
I know I thought my only friend
Was that clinked flask at each round's end
When my two seconds, Ed and Jimmy,
Had sixty seconds help to gimme.

But in the ninth, with pain and knocks
I stopped: I couldn't fight nor box.
Bill missed his swing, the light was tricky,
But I went down, and stayed down, dicky.
"Get up," cried Jim. I said, "I will."
Then all the gang yelled, "Out him, Bill.
Out him." Bill rushed . . . and Clink,
Clink, Clink.
Time! and Jim's knee, and rum to drink.
And round the ring there ran a titter:
"Saved by the call, the bloody quitter."

They drove (a dodge that never fails)
A pin beneath my finger nails.
They poured what seemed a running beck
Of cold spring water down my neck;
Jim with a lancet quick as flies
Lowered the swellings round my eyes.
They sluiced my legs and fanned my face
Through all that blessed minute's grace;

They gave my calves a thorough kneading,
They salved my cuts and stopped the bleeding.
A gulp of liquor dulled the pain,
And then the two flasks clinked again.

Time!

There was Bill as grim as death,
He rushed, I clinched, to get more breath,
And breath I got, though Billy bats
Some stinging short-arms in my slats.
And when we broke, as I foresaw,
He swung his right in for the jaw.
I stopped it on my shoulder bone,
And at the shock I heard Bill groan —
A little groan or moan or grunt
As though I'd hit his wind a bunt.
At that, I clinched, and while we clinched,
His old time right arm dig was flinched,
And when we broke he hit me light
As though he didn't trust his right,

He flapped me somehow with his wrist
As though he couldn't use his fist,
And when he hit he winced with pain.
I thought, "Your sprained thumb's crocked
again."
So I got strength and Bill gave ground,
And that round was an easy round.

During the wait my Jimmy said,
"What's making Billy fight so dead?
He's all to pieces. Is he blown?"
"His thumb's out."
"No? Then it's your own.
It's all your own, but don't be rash —
He's got the goods if you've got cash,
And what one hand can do he'll do,
Be careful this next round or two."

Time. There was Bill, and I felt sick
That luck should play so mean a trick

And give me leave to knock him out
After he'd plainly won the bout.
But by the way the man came at me
He made it plain he meant to bat me;
If you'd a seen the way he come
You wouldn't think he'd crocked a thumb.
With all his skill and all his might
He clipped me dizzy left and right;
The Lord knows what the effort cost,
But he was mad to think he'd lost,
And knowing nothing else could save him
He didn't care what pain it gave him.
He called the music and the dance
For five rounds more and gave no chance.

Try to imagine if you can
The kind of manhood in the man,
And if you'd like to feel his pain
You sprain your thumb and hit the sprain.
And hit it hard, with all your power

On something hard for half-an-hour,
While someone thumps you black and blue,
And then you'll know what Billy knew.
Bill took that pain without a sound
Till halfway through the eighteenth round,
And then I sent him down and out,
And Silas said, "Kane wins the bout."

When Bill came to, you understand,
I ripped the mitten from my hand
And went across to ask Bill shake.
My limbs were all one pain and ache,
I was so weary and so sore
I don't think I'd a stood much more.
Bill in his corner bathed his thumb,
Buttoned his shirt and glowered glum.
"I'll never shake your hand," he said.
"I'd rather see my children dead.
I've been about and had some fun with you,
But you're a liar and I've done with you.

You've knocked me out, you didn't beat me;
Look out the next time that you meet me,
There'll be no friend to watch the clock for
you
And no convenient thumb to crock for you,
And I'll take care, with much delight,
You'll get what you'd a got to-night;
That puts my meaning clear, I guess,
Now get to hell; I want to dress."

I dressed. My backers one and all
Said, "Well done you," or "Good old Saul."
"Saul is a wonder and a fly 'un,
What'll you have, Saul, at the Lion?"
With merry oaths they helped me down
The stony wood path to the town.

The moonlight shone on Cabbage Walk,
It made the limestone look like chalk.
It was too late for any people,

Twelve struck as we went by the steeple.
A dog barked, and an owl was calling,
The squire's brook was still a-falling,
The carved heads on the church looked down
On "Russell, Blacksmith of this Town,"
And all the graves of all the ghosts
Who rise on Christmas Eve in hosts
To dance and carol in festivity
For joy of Jesus Christ's Nativity
(Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons
Beheld 'em from the bell-tower once),
Two and two about about
Singing the end of Advent out,
Dwindling down to windlestraws
When the glittering peacock craws,
As craw the glittering peacock should
When Christ's own star comes over the wood.
Lamb of the sky come out of fold
Wandering windy heavens cold.
So they shone and sang till twelve

When all the bells ring out of theirselve.
Rang a peal for Christmas morn,
Glory, men, for Christ is born.

All the old monks' singing places
Glimmered quick with flitting faces,
Singing anthems, singing hymns
Under carven cherubims.
Ringer Dawe aloft could mark
Faces at the window dark
Crowding, crowding, row on row,
Till all the Church began to glow.
The chapel glowed, the nave, the choir,
All the faces became fire
Below the eastern window high
To see Christ's star come up the sky.
Then they lifted hands and turned,
And all their lifted fingers burned,
Burned like the golden altar tallows,
Burned like a troop of God's own Hallows,

Bringing to mind the burning time
When all the bells will rock and chime
And burning saints on burning horses
Will sweep the planets from their courses
And loose the stars to burn up night.
Lord, give us eyes to bear the light.

We all went quiet down the Scallenge
Lest Police Inspector Drew should challenge.
But 'Spector Drew was sleeping sweet,
His head upon a charges sheet,
Under the gas jet flaring full,
Snorting and snoring like a bull,
His bull cheeks puffed, his bull lips blowing,
His ugly yellow front teeth showing.
Just as we peeped we saw him fumble
And scratch his head, and shift, and mumble.

Down in the lane so thin and dark
The tan-yards stank of bitter bark,
The curate's pigeons gave a flutter,

A cat went courting down the gutter,
And none else stirred a foot or feather.
The houses put their heads together,
Talking, perhaps, so dark and sly,
Of all the folk they'd seen go by,
Children, and men and women, merry all,
Who'd some day pass that way to burial.
It was all dark, but at the turning
The Lion had a window burning.
So in we went and up the stairs,
Treading as still as cats and hares.
The way the stairs creaked made you wonder
If dead men's bones were hidden under.
At head of stairs upon the landing
A woman with a lamp was standing;
She greet each gent at head of stairs
With "Step in, gents, and take your chairs.
The punch'll come when kettle bubble,
But don't make noise or there'll be trouble."
'Twas Doxy Jane, a bouncing girl

With eyes all sparks and hair all curl,
And cheeks all red and lips all coal,
And thirst for men instead of soul.
She's trod her pathway to the fire.
Old Rivers had his nephew by her.

I step aside from Tom and Jimmy
To find if she'd a kiss to gimme.
I blew out lamp 'fore she could speak.
She said, "If you ain't got a cheek,"
And then beside me in the dim,
"Did he beat you or you beat him?"
"Why, I beat him" (though that was wrong).
She said, "You must be turble strong.
I'd be afraid you'd beat me, too."
"You'd not," I said, "I wouldn't do."
"Never?"
"No, never."
"Never?"
"No."

"O Saul. Here's missus. Let me go."
It wasn't missus, so I didn't,
Whether I mid do or I midn't,
Until she'd promised we should meet
Next evening, six, at top of street,
When we could have a quiet talk
On that low wall up Worcester Walk.
And while we whispered there together
I give her silver for a feather
And felt a drunkenness like wine
And shut out Christ in husks and swine.
I felt the dart strike through my liver.
God punish me for't and forgive her.

Each one could be a Jesus mild,
Each one has been a little child,
A little child with laughing look,
A lovely white unwritten book;
A book that God will take, my friend,
As each goes out at journey's end.

The Lord Who gave us Earth and Heaven
Takes that as thanks for all He's given.
The book he lent is given back
All blotted red and smutted black.

"Open the door," said Jim, "and call."
Jane gasped "They'll see me. Loose me,
Saul."
She pushed me by, and ducked downstair
With half the pins out of her hair.
I went inside the lit room rollen
Her scented handkerchief I'd stolen.
"What would you fancy, Saul?" they said.
"A gin punch hot and then to bed."
"Jane, fetch the punch bowl to the gemmen;
And mind you don't put too much lemon.
Our good friend Saul has had a fight of it,
Now smoke up, boys, and make a night of it."

The room was full of men and stink
Of bad cigars and heavy drink.

Riley was nodding to the floor
And gurgling as he wanted more.
His mouth was wide, his face was pale,
His swollen face was sweating ale;
And one of those assembled Greeks
Had corked black crosses on his cheeks.
Thomas was having words with Goss,
He "wouldn't pay, the fight was cross."
And Goss told Tom that "cross or no,
The bets go as the verdicts go,
By all I've ever heard or read of.
So pay, or else I'll knock your head off."
Jim Gurvil said his smutty say
About a girl down Bye Street way,
And how the girl from Froggatt's circus
Died giving birth in Newent work'us.
And Dick told how the Dymock wench
Bore twins, poor thing, on Dog Hill bench;
And how he'd owned to one in Court
And how Judge made him sorry for't.

Jack set a jew's harp twanging drily;
"Gimme another cup," said Riley.
A dozen more were in their glories
With laughs and smokes and smutty stories;
And Jimmy joked and took his sup
And sang his song of "Up, come up."
Jane brought the bowl of stewing gin
And poured the egg and lemon in,
And whisked it up and served it out
While bawdy questions went about.
Jack chucked her chin, and Jim accost her
With bits out of the "Maid of Gloster."
And fifteen arms went round her waist.
(And then men ask, Are Barmaids chaste?)

O young men, pray to be kept whole
From bringing down a weaker soul.
Your minute's joy so meet in doin'
May be the woman's door to ruin;
The door to wandering up and down,

A painted whore at half a crown.
The bright mind fouled, the beauty gay
All eaten out and fallen away,
By drunken days and weary tramps
From pub to pub by city lamps
Till men despise the game they started
Till health and beauty are departed,
And in a slum the reeking hag
Mumbles a crust with toothy jag,
Or gets the river's help to end
The life too wrecked for man to mend.

We spat and smoked and took our swipe
Till Silas up and tap his pipe,
And begged us all to pay attention
Because he'd several things to mention.
We'd seen the fight (Hear, hear. That's
you);
But still one task remained to do,
That task was his, he didn't shun it.

To give the purse to him as won it.
With this remark, from start to out
He'd never seen a brisker bout.
There was the purse. At that he'd leave it.
Let Kane come forward to receive it.

I took the purse and hemmed and bowed,
And called for gin punch for the crowd;
And when the second bowl was done,
I called, "Let's have another one."
Si's wife come in and sipped and sipped
(As women will) till she was pipped.
And Si hit Dicky Twot a clouter
Because he put his arm about her;
But after Si got overtasked
She sat and kissed whoever asked.
My Doxy Jane was splashed by this,
I took her on my knee to kiss.
And Tom cried out, "O damn the gin;
Why can't we all have women in?

Bess Evans, now, or Sister Polly,
Or those two housemaids at the Folly?
Let someone nip to Biddy Price's,
They'd all come in a brace of trices.
Rose Davies, Sue, and Betsy Perks;
One man, one girl, and damn all Turks."
But, no. "More gin," they cried; "Come on.
We'll have the girls in when it's gone."
So round the gin went, hot and heady,
Hot Hollands punch on top of deady.

Hot Hollands punch on top of stout
Puts madness in and wisdom out.
From drunken man to drunken man
The drunken madness raged and ran.
"I'm climber Joe who climbed the spire."
"You're climber Joe the bloody liar."
"Who says I lie?" "I do."
"You lie,

I climbed the spire and had a fly."
"I'm French Suzanne, the Circus Dancer,
I'm going to dance a bloody Lancer."
"If I'd my rights I'm Squire's heir."
"By rights I'd be a millionaire."
"By rights I'd be the lord of you,
But Farmer Scriggins had his do,
He done me, so I've had to hoove it,
I've got it all wrote down to prove it.
And one of these dark winter nights
He'll learn I mean to have my rights;
I'll bloody him a bloody fix,
I'll bloody burn his bloody ricks."

From three long hours of gin and smokes,
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes,
A warmish night, and windows shut,
The room stank like a fox's gut.
The heat and smell and drinking deep
Began to stun the gang to sleep.

Some fell downstairs to sleep on the mat,
Some snored it sodden where they sat.
Dick Twot had lost a tooth and wept,
But all the drunken others slept.
Jane slept beside me in the chair,
And I got up; I wanted air.

I opened window wide and leaned
Out of that pigstye of the fiend
And felt a cool wind go like grace
About the sleeping market-place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy;
And in a second's pause there fell
The cold note of the chapel bell,
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,
And summat made me think of things.
How long those ticking clocks had gone
From church and chapel, on and on,
Ticking the time out, ticking slow

To men and girls who'd come and go,
And how they ticked in belfry dark
When half the town was bishop's park,
And how they'd rung a chime full tilt
The night after the church was built,
And how that night was Lambert's Feast,
The night I'd fought and been a beast.
And how a change had come. And then
I thought, "You tick to different men."

What with the fight and what with drinking
And being awake alone there thinking,
My mind began to carp and tetter,
"If this life's all, the beasts are better."
And then I thought, "I wish I'd seen
The many towns this town has been;
I wish I knew if they'd a-got
A kind of summat we've a-not,
If them as built the church so fair
Were half the chaps folk say they were;

For they'd the skill to draw their plan,
And skill's a joy to any man;
And they'd the strength, not skill alone,
To build it beautiful in stone;
And strength and skill together thus
O, they were happier men than us.

But if they were, they had to die
The same as every one and I.
And no one lives again, but dies,
And all the bright goes out of eyes,
And all the skill goes out of hands,
And all the wise brain understands,
And all the beauty, all the power
Is cut down like a withered flower.
In all the show from birth to rest
I give the poor dumb cattle best."

I wondered, then, why life should be,
And what would be the end of me

When youth and health and strength were gone
And cold old age came creeping on?
A keeper's gun? The Union ward?
Or that new quod at Hereford?
And looking round I felt disgust
At all the nights of drink and lust,
And all the looks of all the swine
Who'd said that they were friends of mine;
And yet I knew, when morning came,
The morning would be just the same,
For I'd have drinks and Jane would meet me
And drunken Silas Jones would greet me,
And I'd risk quod and keeper's gun
Till all the silly game was done.
"For parson chaps are mad, supposin'
A chap can change the road he's chosen."
And then the Devil whispered, "Saul,
Why should you want to live at all?
Why fret and sweat and try to mend?

It's all the same thing in the end.
But when it's done," he said, "it's ended.
Why stand it, since it can't be mended?"
And in my heart I heard him plain,
"Throw yourself down and end it, Kane."

"Why not?" said I. "Why not? But no.
I won't. I've never had my go.
I've not had all the world can give.
Death by and by, but first I'll live.
The world owes me my time of times,
And that time's coming now, by crimes."

A madness took me then. I felt
I'd like to hit the world a belt.
I felt that I could fly through air,
A screaming star with blazing hair,
A rushing comet, crackling, numbing
The folk with fear of judgment coming,
A 'Lijah in a fiery car,
Coming to tell folk what they are.

"That's what I'll do," I shouted loud,
"I'll tell this sanctimonious crowd
This town of window peeping, prying,
Maligning, peering, hinting, lying,
Male and female human blots
Who would, but daren't be, whores and sots,
That they're so steeped in petty vice
That they're less excellent than lice,
That they're so soaked in petty virtue
That touching one of them will dirt you,
Dirt you with the stain of mean
Cheating trade and going between,
Pinching, starving, scraping, hoarding,
Spying through the chinks of boarding
To see if Sue, the prentice lean,
Dares to touch the margarine.
Fawning, cringing, oiling boots,
Raging in the crowd's pursuits,
Flinging stones at all the Stephens,

Standing firm with all the evens,
Making hell for all the odd,
All the lonely ones of God,
Those poor lonely ones who find
Dogs more mild than human kind.
For dogs," I said, "are nobles born
To most of you, you cockled corn.
I've known dogs to leave their dinner,
Nosing a kind heart in a sinner.
Poor old Crafty wagged his tail
The day I first came home from jail.
When all my folk, so primly clad,
Glowered black and thought me mad,
And muttered how they'd been respected,
While I was what they'd all expected.
(I've thought of that old dog for years,
And of how near I come to tears.)

But you, you minds of bread and cheese,
Are less divine than that dog's fleas.

You suck blood from kindly friends,
And kill them when it serves your ends.
Double traitors, double black,
Stabbing only in the back,
Stabbing with the knives you borrow
From the friends you bring to sorrow.
You stab all that's true and strong,
Truth and strength you say are wrong,
Meek and mild, and sweet and creeping,
Repeating, canting, cadging, peeping,
That's the art and that's the life
To win a man his neighbour's wife.
All that's good and all that's true,
You kill that, so I'll kill you."

At that I tore my clothes in shreds
And hurled them on the window leads;
I flung my boots through both the winders
And knocked the glass to little flinders;
The punch bowl and the tumblers followed,

And then I seized the lamps and holloed,
And down the stairs, and tore back bolts,
As mad as twenty blooded colts;
And out into the street I pass,
As mad as two-year-olds at grass,
A naked madman waving grand
A blazing lamp in either hand.
I yelled like twenty drunken sailors,
"The devil's come among the tailors."
A blaze of flame behind me streamed,
And then I clashed the lamps and screamed
"I'm Satan, newly come from hell."
And then I spied the fire bell.

I've been a ringer, so I know
How best to make a big bell go.
So on to bell-rope swift I swoop,
And stick my one foot in the loop
And heave a down-swig till I groan,
"Awake, you swine, you devil's own."

I made the fire-bell awake,
I felt the bell-rope throb and shake;
I felt the air mingle and clang
And beat the walls a muffled bang,
And stifle back and boom and bay
Like muffled peals on Boxing Day,
And then surge up and gather shape,
And spread great pinions and escape;
And each great bird of clanging shrieks
O Fire! Fire, from iron beaks.
My shoulders cracked to send around
Those shrieking birds made out of sound
With news of fire in their bills.
(They heard 'em plain beyond Wall Hills.)

Up go the winders, out come heads,
I heard the springs go creak in beds;
But still I heave and sweat and tire,
And still the clang goes "Fire, Fire!"
"Where is it, then? Who is it, there?

You ringer, stop, and tell us where."
"Run round and let the Captain know."
"It must be bad, he's ringing so."
"It's in the town, I see the flame;
Look there! Look there, how red it came."
"Where is it, then? O stop the bell."
I stopped and called: "It's fire of hell;
And this is Sodom and Gomorrah,
And now I'll burn you up, begorra."

By this the firemen were mustering,
The half-dressed stable men were flustering,
Backing the horses out of stalls
While this man swears and that man bawls,
"Don't take th' old mare. Back, Toby,
back.
Back, Lincoln. Where's the fire, Jack?"
"Damned if I know. Out Preston way."
"No. It's at Chancey's Pitch, they say."
"It's sixteen ricks at Pauntley burnt."

"You back old Darby out, I durn't."
They ran the big red engine out,
And put 'em to with damn and shout.
And then they start to raise the shire,
"Who brought the news, and where's the fire?"
They'd moonlight, lamps, and gas to light 'em.
I give a screech-owl's screech to fright 'em,
And snatch from underneath their noses
The nozzles of the fire hoses.
"I am the fire. Back, stand back,
Or else I'll fetch your skulls a crack;
D'you see these copper nozzles here?
They weigh ten pounds apiece, my dear;
I'm fire of hell come up this minute
To burn this town, and all that's in it.
To burn you dead and burn you clean,
You cogwheels in a stopped machine,
You hearts of snakes, and brains of pigeons,

You dead devout of dead religions,
You offspring of the hen and ass,
By Pilate ruled, and Caiaphas.
Now your account is totted. Learn
Hell's flames are loose and you shall burn."

At that I leaped and screamed and ran,
I heard their cries go, "Catch him, man."
"Who was it?" "Down him." "Out him,
Ern."
"Duck him at pump, we'll see who'll
burn."
A policeman clutched, a fireman clutched,
A dozen others snatched and touched.
"By God, he's stripped down to his buff."
"By God, we'll make him warm enough."
"After him," "Catch him," "Out him,"
"Scrob him."
"We'll give him hell." "By God, we'll mob
him."

"We'll duck him, scrout him, flog him, fratch him."

"All right," I said. "But first you'll catch him."

The men who don't know to the root
The joy of being swift of foot,
Have never known divine and fresh
The glory of the gift of flesh,
Nor felt the feet exult, nor gone
Along a dim road, on and on,
Knowing again the bursting glows,
The mating hare in April knows,
Who tingles to the pads with mirth
At being the swiftest thing on earth.
O, if you want to know delight,
Run naked in an autumn night,
And laugh, as I laughed then, to find
A running rabble drop behind,
And whang, on every door you pass,

Two copper nozzles, tipped with brass,
And doubly whang at every turning,
And yell, "All hell's let loose, and burning."

I beat my brass and shouted fire
At doors of parson, lawyer, squire,
At all three doors I threshed and slammed
And yelled aloud that they were damned.
I clodded squire's glass with turves
Because he spring-gunned his preserves.
Through parson's glass my nozzle swishes
Because he stood for loaves and fishes,
But parson's glass I spared a tittle.
He give me a orange once when little,
And he who gives a child a treat
Makes joy-bells ring in Heaven's street,
And he who gives a child a home
Builds palaces in Kingdom come,
And she who gives a baby birth
Brings Saviour Christ again to Earth,

For life is joy, and mind is fruit,
And body's precious earth and root.
But lawyer's glass — well, never mind,
Th'old Adam's strong in me, I find.
God pardon man, and may God's son
Forgive the evil things I've done.

What more? By Dirty Lane I crept
Back to the Lion, where I slept.
The raging madness hot and floodin'
Boiled itself out and left me sudden,
Left me worn out and sick and cold,
Aching as though I'd all grown old;
So there I lay, and there they found me
On door-mat, with a curtain round me.
Si took my heels and Jane my head
And laughed, and carried me to bed.
And from the neighbouring street they reskied
My boots and trousers, coat and weskit;

They bath-bricked both the nozzles bright
To be mementoes of the night,
And knowing what I should awake with
They flannelled me a quart to slake with,
And sat and shook till half past two
Expecting Police Inspector Drew.

I woke and drank, and went to meat
In clothes still dirty from the street.
Down in the bar I heard 'em tell
How someone rang the fire bell,
And how th' inspector's search had thriven,
And how five pounds reward was given.
And Shepherd Boyce, of Marley, glad us
By saying it was blokes from mad'us,
Or two young rips lodged at the Prince
Whom none had seen nor heard of since,
Or that young blade from Worcester Walk
(You know how country people talk).
Young Joe the ostler come in sad,

He said th'old mare had bit his dad.
He said there'd come a blazing screeching
Daft Bible-prophet chap a-preaching,
Had put th'old mare in such a taking
She'd thought the bloody earth was quaking.
And others come and spread a tale
Of cut-throats out of Gloucester jail,
And how we needed extra cops
With all them Welsh come picking hops;
With drunken Welsh in all our sheds
We might be murdered in our beds.

By all accounts, both men and wives
Had had the scare up of their lives.

I ate and drank and gathered strength,
And stretched along the bench full length,
Or crossed to window seat to pat
Black Silas Jones's little cat.
At four I called, "You devil's own,

The second trumpet shall be blown.
The second trump, the second blast;
Hell's flames are loosed, and judgment's passed.
Too late for mercy now. Take warning.
I'm death and hell and Judgment morning."
I hurled the bench into the settle,
I banged the table on the kettle,
I sent Joe's quart of cider spinning.
"Lo, here begins my second inning."
Each bottle, mug, and jug and pot
I smashed to crocks in half a tot;
And Joe, and Si, and Nick, and Percy
I rolled together topsy versy.
And as I ran I heard 'em call,
"Now damn to hell, what's gone with Saul?"

Out into street I ran uproarious
The devil dancing in me glorious.

And as I ran I yell and shriek
"Come on, now, turn the other cheek."
Across the way by almshouse pump
I see old puffing parson stump.
Old parson, red-eyed as a ferret
From nightly wrestlings with the spirit;
I ran across, and barred his path.
His turkey gills went red as wrath
And then he froze, as parsons can.
"The police will deal with you, my man."
"Not yet," said I, "not yet they won't;
And now you'll hear me, like or don't.
The English Church both is and was
A subsidy of Caiaphas.
I don't believe in Prayer nor Bible,
They're lies all through, and you're a libel,
A libel on the Devil's plan
When first he miscreated man.
You mumble through a formal code
To get which martyrs burned and glowed.

I look on martyrs as mistakes,
But still they burned for it at stakes;
Your only fire's the jolly fire
Where you can guzzle port with Squire,
And back and praise his damned opinions
About his temporal dominions.
You let him give the man who digs,
A filthy hut unfit for pigs,
Without a well, without a drain,
With mossy thatch that lets in rain,
Without a 'lotment, 'less he rent it,
And never meat, unless he scent it,
But weekly doles of 'leven shilling
To make a grown man strong and willing,
To do the hardest work on earth
And feed his wife when she gives birth,
And feed his little children's bones.
I tell you, man, the Devil groans.
With all your main and all your might
You back what is against what's right;

You let the Squire do things like these,
You back him in't and give him ease,
You take his hand, and drink his wine,
And he's a hog, but you're a swine.
For you take gold to teach God's ways
And teach man how to sing God's praise.
And now I'll tell you what you teach
In downright honest English speech.

"You teach the ground-down starving man
That Squire's greed's Jehovah's plan.
You get his learning circumvented
Lest it should make him discontented
(Better a brutal, starving nation
Than men with thoughts above their station),
You let him neither read nor think,
You goad his wretched soul to drink
And then to jail, the drunken boor;
O sad intemperance of the poor.
You starve his soul till it's rapscallion,

Then blame his flesh for being stallion.
You send your wife around to paint
The golden glories of "restraint."
How moral exercise bewild'rin'
Would soon result in fewer children.
You work a day in Squire's fields
And see what sweet restraint it yields,
A woman's day at turnip picking,
Your heart's too fat for plough or ricking.

"And you whom luck taught French and Greek
Have purple flaps on either cheek,
A stately house, and time for knowledge,
And gold to send your sons to college,
That pleasant place, where getting learning
Is also key to money earning.
But quite your damndest want of grace
Is what you do to save your face;
The way you sit astride the gates

By padding wages out of rates;
Your Christmas gifts of shoddy blankets
That every working soul may thank its
Loving parson, loving squire
Through whom he can't afford a fire.
Your well-packed bench, your prison pen,
To keep them something less than men;
Your friendly clubs to help 'em bury,
Your charities of midwifery.
Your bidding children duck and cap
To them who give them workhouse pap.
O, what you are, and what you preach,
And what you do, and what you teach
Is not God's Word, nor honest schism,
But Devil's cant and pauperism."

By this time many folk had gathered
To listen to me while I blathered;
I said my piece, and when I'd said it,
I'll do old purple parson credit,

He sunk (as sometimes parsons can)
His coat's excuses in the man.
"You think that Squire and I are kings
Who made the existing state of things,
And made it ill. I answer, No,
States are not made, nor patched; they grow,
Grow slow through centuries of pain
And grow correctly in the main,
But only grow by certain laws
Of certain bits in certain jaws.
You want to doctor that. Let be.
You cannot patch a growing tree.
Put these two words beneath your hat,
These two: securus judicat.
The social states of human kinds
Are made by multitudes of minds,
And after multitudes of years
A little human growth appears
Worth having, even to the soul
Who sees most plain it's not the whole.

This state is dull and evil, both,
I keep it in the path of growth;
You think the Church an outworn fetter;
Kane, keep it, till you've built a better.
And keep the existing social state;
I quite agree it's out of date,
One does too much, another shirks,
Unjust, I grant; but still . . . it works.
To get the whole world out of bed
And washed, and dressed, and warmed, and
fed,
To work, and back to bed again,
Believe me, Saul, costs worlds of pain.
Then, as to whether true or sham
That book of Christ, Whose priest I am;
The Bible is a lie, say you,
Where do you stand, suppose it true?
Good-bye. But if you've more to say,
My doors are open night and day.
Meanwhile, my friend, 'twould be no sin

To mix more water in your gin.
We're neither saints nor Philip Sidneys,
But mortal men with mortal kidneys."

He took his snuff, and wheezed a greeting,
And waddled off to mothers' meeting;
I hung my head upon my chest,
I give old purple parson best.
For while the Plough tips round the Pole
The trained mind outs the upright soul,
As Jesus said the trained mind might,
Being wiser than the sons of light,
But trained men's minds are spread so thin
They let all sorts of darkness in;
Whatever light man finds they doubt it
They love, not light, but talk about it.

But parson'd proved to people's eyes
That I was drunk, and he was wise;
And people grinned and women tittered,
And little children mocked and twittered.

So, blazing mad, I stalked to bar
To show how noble drunkards are,
And guzzled spirits like a beast,
To show contempt for Church and priest,
Until, by six, my wits went round
Like hungry pigs in parish pound.
At half past six, rememb'ring Jane,
I staggered into street again
With mind made up (or primed with gin)
To bash the cop who'd run me in;
For well I knew I'd have to cock up
My legs that night inside the lock-up,
And it was my most fixed intent
To have a fight before I went.
Our Fates are strange, and no one knows his;
Our lovely Saviour Christ disposes.

Jane wasn't where we'd planned, the jade.
She'd thought me drunk and hadn't stayed.
So I went up the Walk to look for her

And lingered by the little brook for her,
And dowsed my face, and drank at spring,
And watched two wild duck on the wing.
The moon come pale, the wind come cool,
A big pike leapt in Lower Pool,
The peacock screamed, the clouds were strak-
ing,
My cut cheek felt the weather breaking;
An orange sunset waned and thinned
Foretelling rain and western wind,
And while I watched I heard distinct
The metals on the railway clinked.
The blood-edged clouds were all in tatters,
The sky and earth seemed mad as hatters;
They had a death look, wild and odd,
Of something dark foretold by God.
And seeing it so, I felt so shaken
I wouldn't keep the road I'd taken,
But wandered back towards the inn
Resolved to brace myself with gin.

And as I walked, I said, "It's strange,
There's Death let loose to-night, and
Change."

In Cabbage Walk I made a haul
Of two big pears from lawyer's wall,
And, munching one, I took the lane
Back into Market-place again.
Lamp-lighter Dick had passed the turning,
And all the Homend lamps were burning.
The windows shone, the shops were busy,
But that strange Heaven made me dizzy.
The sky had all God's warning writ
In bloody marks all over it,
And over all I thought there was
A ghastly light besides the gas.
The Devil's tasks and Devil's rages
Were giving me the Devil's wages.

In Market-place it's always light,
The big shop windows make it bright;

And in the press of people buying
I spied a little fellow crying
Because his mother'd gone inside
And left him there, and so he cried.
And mother'd beat him when she found him,
And mother's whip would curl right round
him,
And mother'd say he'd done't to crost her,
Though there being crowds about he'd lost
her.

Lord, give to men who are old and rougher
The things that little children suffer,
And let keep bright and undefiled
The young years of the little child.
I pat his head at edge of street
And gi'm my second pear to eat.
Right under lamp, I pat his head,
"I'll stay till mother come," I said,
And stay I did, and joked and talked,

And shoppers wondered as they walked.
"There's that Saul Kane, the drunken blaggard,
Talking to little Jimmy Jaggard.
The drunken blaggard reeks of drink."
"Whatever will his mother think?"
"Wherever has his mother gone?
Nip round to Mrs. Jaggard's, John,
And say her Jimmy's out again,
In Market place, with boozer Kane."
"When he come out to-day he staggered.
O, Jimmy Jaggard, Jimmy Jaggard."
"His mother's gone inside to bargain,
Run in and tell her, Polly Margin,
And tell her poacher Kane is tipsy
And selling Jimmy to a gipsy."
"Run in to Mrs. Jaggard, Ellen,
Or else, dear knows, there'll be no tellin',
And don't dare leave yer till you've fount her,

You'll find her at the linen counter."
I told a tale, to Jim's delight,
Of where the tom-cats go by night,
And how when moonlight come they went
Among the chimneys black and bent,
From roof to roof, from house to house,
With little baskets full of mouse
All red and white, both joint and chop
Like meat out of a butcher's shop;
Then all along the wall they creep
And everyone is fast asleep,
And honey-hunting moths go by,
And by the bread-batch crickets cry;
Then on they hurry, never waiting
To lawyer's backyard cellar grating
Where Jaggard's cat, with clever paw,
Unhooks a broke-brick's secret door;
Then down into the cellar black,
Across the wood slug's slimy track,
Into an old cask's quiet hollow,

Where they've got seats for what's to follow;
Then each tom-cat lights little candles,
And O, the stories and the scandals,
And O, the songs and Christmas carols,
And O, the milk from little barrels.
They light a fire fit for roasting
(And how good mouse-meat smells when toasting),
Then down they sit to merry feast
While moon goes west and sun comes east.

Sometimes they make so merry there
Old lawyer come to head of stair
To 'fend with fist and poker took firm
His parchments channelled by the bookworm,
And all his deeds, and all his packs
Of withered ink and sealing wax;
And there he stands, with candle raised,
And listens like a man amazed,
Or like a ghost a man stands dumb at,

He says, "Hush! Hush! I'm sure there's
summat."
He hears outside the brown owl call,
He hears the death-tick tap the wall,
The gnawing of the wainscot mouse,
The creaking up and down the house,
The unhooked window's hinges ranging,
The sounds that say the wind is changing.
At last he turns, and shakes his head,
"It's nothing, I'll go back to bed."

And just then Mrs. Jaggard came
To view and end her Jimmy's shame.

She made one rush and gi'm a bat
And shook him like a dog a rat.
"I can't turn round but what you're straying.
I'll give you tales and gipsy playing.
I'll give you wand'ring off like this
And listening to whatever 'tis,

You'll laugh the little side of the can,
You'll have the whip for this, my man;
And not a bite of meat nor bread
You'll touch before you go to bed.
Some day you'll break your mother's heart,
After God knows she's done her part,
Working her arms off day and night
Trying to keep your collars white.
Look at your face, too, in the street.
What dirty filth've you found to eat?
Now don't you blubber here, boy, or
I'll give you sum't to blubber for."
She snatched him off from where we stand
And knocked the pear-core from his hand,
And looked at me, "You Devil's limb,
How dare you talk to Jaggard's Jim;
You drunken, poaching, boozing brute, you,
If Jaggard was a man he'd shoot you."
She glared all this, but didn't speak,
She gasped, white hollows in her cheek;

Jimmy was writhing, screaming wild,
The shoppers thought I'd killed the child.

I had to speak, so I begun.
"You'd oughtn't beat your little son;
He did no harm, but seeing him there
I talked to him and gi'm a pear;
I'm sure the poor child meant no wrong,
It's all my fault he stayed so long,
He'd not have stayed, mum, I'll be bound
If I'd not chanced to come around.
It's all my fault he stayed, not his.
I kept him here, that's how it is."
"Oh! And how dare you, then?" says she,
"How dare you tempt my boy from me?
How dare you do't, you drunken swine,
Is he your child or is he mine?
A drunken sot they've had the beak to,
Has got his dirty whores to speak to,
His dirty mates with whom he drink,

Not little children, one would think.
Look on him, there," she says, "look on him
And smell the stinking gin upon him,
The lowest sot, the drunknest liar,
The dirtiest dog in all the shire:
Nice friends for any woman's son
After ten years, and all she's done.

"For I've had eight, and buried five,
And only three are left alive.
I've given them all we could afford.
I've taught them all to fear the Lord.
They've had the best we had to give,
The only three the Lord let live.

"For Minnie whom I loved the worst
Died mad in childbed with her first.
And John and Mary died of measles,
And Rob was drownded at the Teasels.
And little Nan, dear little sweet,
A cart run over in the street;

Her little shift was all one stain,
I prayed God put her out of pain.
And all the rest are gone or going
The road to hell, and there's no knowing
For all I've done and all I've made them
I'd better not have overlaid them.
For Susan went the ways of shame
The time the 'till'ry regiment came,
And t'have her child without a father
I think I'd have her buried rather.
And Dicky boozes, God forgimme,
And now't's to be the same with Jimmy.
And all I've done and all I've bore
Has made a drunkard and a whore,
A bastard boy who wasn't meant,
And Jimmy gwine where Dicky went;
For Dick began the self-same way
And my old hairs are going gray,
And my poor man's a withered knee,
And all the burden falls on me.

"I've washed eight little children's limbs,
I've taught eight little souls their hymns,
I've risen sick and lain down pinched
And borne it all and never flinched;
But to see him, the town's disgrace,
With God's commandments broke in's face,
Who never worked, not he, nor earned,
Nor will do till the seas are burned,
Who never did since he was whole
A hand's turn for a human soul,
But poached and stole and gone with women,
And swilled down gin enough to swim in,
To see him only lift one finger
To make my little Jimmy linger.
In spite of all his mother's prayers,
And all her ten long years of cares,
And all her broken spirit's cry
That drunkard's finger puts them by,
And Jimmy turns. And now I see
That just as Dick was, Jim will be,

And all my life will have been vain.
I might have spared myself the pain,
And done the world a blessed riddance
If I'd a drowned 'em all like kittens.
And he the sot, so strong and proud,
Who'd make white shirts of's mother's shroud,
He laughs now, it's a joke to him,
Though it's the gates of hell to Jim.

"I've had my heart burnt out like coal,
And drops of blood wrung from my soul
Day in, day out, in pain and tears,
For five and twenty wretched years;
And he, he's ate the fat and sweet,
And loafed and spat at top of street,
And drunk and leched from day till morrow,
And never known a moment's sorrow.
He come out drunk from th' inn to look
The day my little Nan was took;
He sat there drinking, glad and gay,

The night my girl was led astray;
He praised my Dick for singing well,
The night Dick took the road to hell;
And when my corpse goes stiff and blind,
Leaving four helpless souls behind,
He will be there still, drunk and strong.
It do seem hard. It do seem wrong.
But 'Woe to him by whom the offence,'
Says our Lord Jesus' Testaments.
Whatever seems, God doth not slumber
Though he lets pass times without number.
He'll come with trump to call his own,
And this world's way'll be overthrown.
He'll come with glory and with fire
To cast great darkness on the liar,
To burn the drunkard and the treacher,
And do his judgment on the lecher,
To glorify the spirits' faces
Of those whose ways were stony places,
Who chose with Ruth the better part;

O Lord, I see Thee as Thou art,
O God, the fiery four-edged sword,
The thunder of the wrath outpoured,
The fiery four-faced creatures burning,
And all the four-faced wheels all turning,
Coming with trump and fiery saint.
Jim, take me home, I'm turning faint."
They went, and some cried, "Good old sod."
"She put it to him straight, by God."

Summat she was, or looked, or said,
Went home and made me hang my head.
I slunk away into the night
Knowing deep down that she was right.
I'd often heard religious ranters,
And put them down as windy canters,
But this old mother made me see
The harm I done by being me.
Being both strong and given to sin
I 'tracted weaker vessels in.

So back to bar to get more drink,
I didn't dare begin to think,
And there were drinks and drunken singing,
As though this life were dice for flinging;
Dice to be flung, and nothing furder,
And Christ's blood just another murder.
"Come on, drinks round, salue, drink hearty,
Now, Jane, the punch-bowl for the party.
If any here won't drink with me
I'll knock his bloody eyes out. See?
Come on, cigars round, rum for mine,
Sing us a smutty song, some swine."
But though the drinks and songs went round
That thought remained, it was not drowned.
And when I'd rise to get a light
I'd think, "What's come to me to-night?"

There's always crowds when drinks are standing.
The house doors slammed along the landing,

The rising wind was gusty yet,
And those who came in late were wet;
And all my body's nerves were snappin'
With sense of summat 'bout to happen,
And music seemed to come and go
And seven lights danced in a row.
There used to be a custom then,
Miss Bourne, the Friend, went round at ten
To all the pubs in all the place,
To bring the drunkards' souls to grace;
Some sulked, of course, and some were stirred,
But none give her a dirty word.
A tall pale woman, grey and bent,
Folk said of her that she was sent.
She wore Friends' clothes, and women smiled,
But she'd a heart just like a child.
She come to us near closing time
When we were at some smutty rhyme,
And I was mad, and ripe for fun;
I wouldn't a minded what I done.

So when she come so prim and grey
I pound the bar and sing, "Hooray,
Here's Quaker come to bless and kiss us,
Come, have a gin and bitters, missus.
Or may be Quaker girls so prim
Would rather start a bloody hymn.
Now Dick, oblige. A hymn, you swine,
Pipe up the 'Officer of the Line,'
A song to make one's belly ache,
Or 'Nell and Roger at the Wake,'
Or that sweet song, the talk in town,
'The lady fair and Abel Brown.'
'O, who's that knocking at the door,'
Miss Bourne'll play the music score."
The men stood dumb as cattle are,
They grinned, but thought I'd gone too far,
There come a hush and no one break it,
They wondered how Miss Bourne would take it.
She up to me with black eyes wide,

She looked as though her spirit cried;
She took my tumbler from the bar
Beside where all the matches are
And poured it out upon the floor dust,
Among the fag-ends, spit and saw-dust.

"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross.
All that you are is that Christ's loss."
The clock run down and struck a chime
And Mrs. Si said, "Closing time."

The wet was pelting on the pane
And something broke inside my brain,

I heard the rain drip from the gutters
And Silas putting up the shutters,
While one by one the drinkers went;
I got a glimpse of what it meant,
How she and I had stood before
In some old town by some old door
Waiting intent while someone knocked
Before the door for ever locked;
She was so white that I was scared,
A gas jet, turned the wrong way, flared,
And Silas snapped the bars in place.
Miss Bourne stood white and searched my face.
When Silas done, with ends of tunes
He 'gan a gathering the spittoons,
His wife primmed lips and took the till.
Miss Bourne stood still and I stood still,
And "Tick. Slow. Tick. Slow" went the clock.
She said, "He waits until you knock."
She turned at that and went out swift,
Si grinned and winked, his missus sniffed.

I heard her clang the Lion door,
I marked a drink-drop roll to floor;
It took up scraps of sawdust, furry,
And crinkled on, a half inch, blurry;
A drop from my last glass of gin;
And someone waiting to come in,
A hand upon the door latch gropen
Knocking the man inside to open.
I know the very words I said,
They bayed like bloodhounds in my head.
"The water's going out to sea
And there's a great moon calling me;
But there's a great sun calls the moon,
And all God's bells will carol soon
For joy and glory and delight
Of someone coming home to-night."

Out into darkness, out to night,
My flaring heart gave plenty light,
So wild it was there was no knowing

Whether the clouds or stars were blowing;
Blown chimney pots and folk blown blind,
And puddles glimmering like my mind,
And chinking glass from windows banging,
And inn signs swung like people hanging,
And in my heart the drink unpriced,
The burning cataracts of Christ.

I did not think, I did not strive,
The deep peace burnt my me alive;
The bolted door had broken in,
I knew that I had done with sin.
I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

O glory of the lighted mind.
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.
The station brook, to my new eyes,

Was babbling out of Paradise,
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.
The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,
The wild hop withering in the hedge,
The lights in huntsman's upper storey
Were parts of an eternal glory,
Were God's eternal garden flowers.
I stood in bliss at this for hours.

O glory of the lighted soul.
The dawn came up on Bradlow Knoll,
The dawn with glittering on the grasses,
The dawn which pass and never passes.

"It's dawn," I said, "And chimney's smoking,
And all the blessed fields are soaking.

It's dawn, and there's an engine shunting;
And hounds, for huntsman's going hunting.
It's dawn, and I must wander north
Along the road Christ led me forth."

So up the road I wander slow
Past where the snowdrops used to grow
With celandines in early springs,
When rainbows were triumphant things
And dew so bright and flowers so glad,
Eternal joy to lass and lad.
And past the lovely brook I paced,
The brook whose source I never traced,
The brook, the one of two which rise
In my green dream in Paradise,
In wells where heavenly buckets clink
To give God's wandering thirsty drink
By those clean cots of carven stone
Where the clear water sings alone.
Then down, past that white-blossomed pond,

And past the chestnut trees beyond,
And past the bridge the fishers knew,
Where yellow flag flowers once grew,
Where we'd go gathering cops of clover,
In sunny June times long since over.
O clover-cops half white, half red,
O beauty from beyond the dead.
O blossom, key to earth and heaven,
O souls that Christ has new forgiven.

Then down the hill to gipsies' pitch
By where the brook clucks in the ditch.
A gipsy's camp was in the copse,
Three felted tents, with beehive tops,
And round black marks where fires had been,
And one old waggon painted green,
And three ribbed horses wrenching grass,
And three wild boys to watch me pass,
And one old woman by the fire

Hulking a rabbit warm from wire.
I loved to see the horses bait.
I felt I walked at Heaven's gate,
That Heaven's gate was opened wide
Yet still the gipsies camped outside.
The waste souls will prefer the wild,
Long after life is meek and mild.
Perhaps when man has entered in
His perfect city free from sin,
The campers will come past the walls
With old lame horses full of galls,
And waggons hung about with withies,
And burning coke in tinker's stithies,
And see the golden town, and choose,
And think the wild too good to lose.
And camp outside, as these camped then
With wonder at the entering men.
So past, and past the stone heap white
That dewberry trailers hid from sight,
And down the field so full of springs,

Where mewing peewits clap their wings,
And past the trap made for the mill
Into the field below the hill.
There was a mist along the stream,
A wet mist, dim, like in a dream;
I heard the heavy breath of cows,
And waterdrops from th'alder boughs;
And eels, or snakes, in dripping grass,
Whipping aside to let me pass.
The gate was backed against the ryme
To pass the cows at milking time.
And by the gate as I went out
A moldwarp rooted earth wi's snout.
A few steps up the Callows' Lane
Brought me above the mist again,
The two great fields arose like death
Above the mists of human breath.

All earthly things that blessèd morning
Were everlasting joy and warning.

The gate was Jesus' way made plain,
The mole was Satan foiled again,
Black blinded Satan snouting way
Along the red of Adam's clay ;
The mist was error and damnation,
The lane the road unto salvation.
Out of the mist into the light,
O blessèd gift of inner sight.
The past was faded like a dream ;
There come the jingling of a team,
A ploughman's voice, a clink of chain,
Slow hoofs, and harness under strain.
Up the slow slope a team came bowing,
Old Callow at his autumn ploughing,
Old Callow, stooped above the hales,
Ploughing the stubble into wales.
His grave eyes looking straight ahead,
Shearing a long straight furrow red ;
His plough-foot high to give it earth
To bring new food for men to birth.

O wet red swathe of earth laid bare,
O truth, O strength, O gleaming share,
O patient eyes that watch the goal,
O ploughman of the sinner's soul.
O Jesus, drive the coulter deep
To plough my living man from sleep.

Slow up the hill the plough team plod,
Old Callow at the task of God,
Helped by man's wit, helped by the brute,
Turning a stubborn clay to fruit,
His eyes forever on some sign
To help him plough a perfect line.
At top of rise the plough team stopped,
The fore-horse bent his head and cropped.
Then the chains chack, the brasses jingle,
The lean reins gather through the cringle,
The figures move against the sky,
The clay wave breaks as they go by.
I kneeled there in the muddy fallow,

I knew that Christ was there with Callow,
That Christ was standing there with me,
That Christ had taught me what to be,
That I should plough, and as I ploughed
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,
And as I drove the clods apart
Christ would be ploughing in my heart,
Through rest-harrow and bitter roots,
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits.

O Christ who holds the open gate,
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter
Of holy white birds flying after,
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn,
The young green corn divinely springing,
The young green corn forever singing;
And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessèd feet shall glitter there,

And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the golden harvest's yield,
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

The share will jar on many a stone,
Thou wilt not let me stand alone;
And I shall feel (thou wilt not fail),
Thy hand on mine upon the hale.
Near Bullen Bank, on Gloucester Road,
Thy everlasting mercy showed
The ploughman patient on the hill
Forever there, forever still,
Ploughing the hill with steady yoke
Of pine-trees lightning-struck and broke.
I've marked the May Hill ploughman stay
There on his hill, day after day
Driving his team against the sky,

While men and women live and die.
And now and then he seems to stoop
To clear the coulter with the scoop,
Or touch an ox to haw or gee
While Severn stream goes out to sea.
The sea with all her ships and sails,
And that great smoky port in Wales,
And Gloucester tower bright i' the sun,
All know that patient wandering one.
And sometimes when they burn the leaves
The bonfires' smoking trails and heaves,
And girt red flamës twink and twire
As though he ploughed the hill afire.
And in men's hearts in many lands
A spiritual ploughman stands
Forever waiting, waiting now,
The heart's "Put in, man, zook the plough."

By this the sun was all one glitter,
The little birds were all in twitter;

Out of a tuft a little lark
Went higher up than I could mark,
His little throat was all one thirst
To sing until his heart should burst
To sing aloft in golden light
His song from blue air out of sight.
The mist drove by, and now the cows
Came plodding up to milking house.
Followed by Frank, the Callows' cowman,
Who whistled "Adam was a ploughman."
There come such cawing from the rooks,
Such running chuck from little brooks,
One thought it March, just budding green,
With hedgerows full of celandine.
An otter 'out of stream and played,
Two hares come loping up and stayed;
Wide-eyed and tender-eared but bold.
Sheep bleated up by Penny's fold.
I heard a partridge covey call,
The morning sun was bright on all.

Down the long slope the plough team drove
The tossing rooks arose and hove.
A stone struck on the share. A word
Came to the team. The red earth stirred.

I crossed the hedge by shooter's gap,
I hitched my boxer's belt a strap,
I jumped the ditch and crossed the fallow:
I took the hales from farmer Callow.

How swift the summer goes,
Forget-me-not, pink, rose.
The young grass when I started
And now the hay is carted,
And now my song is ended,
And all the summer spended;
The blackbird's second brood
Routs beech leaves in the wood;
The pink and rose have speeded,
Forget-me-not has seeded.

Only the winds that blew,
The rain that makes things new,
The earth that hides things old,
And blessings manifold.

O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing green,
O lily bursting white,
Dear lily of delight,
Spring in my heart agen
That I may flower to men.

GREAT HAMPDEN. June, 1911.

NOTE

"The Everlasting Mercy" first appeared in *The English Review* for October, 1911. I thank the Editor and Proprietors of that paper for permitting me to reprint it here. The persons and events described in the poem are entirely imaginary, and no reference is made or intended to any living person.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

DAUBER

I

Four bells were struck, the watch was called
on deck,
All work aboard was over for the hour,
And some men sang and others played
at check,
Or mended clothes or watched the sunset
glower.
The bursting west was like an opening
flower,
And one man watched it till the light was
dim,
But no one went across to talk to him.

He was the painter in that swift ship's
crew,
Lampman and painter — tall, a slight-built
man,

Young for his years, and not yet twenty-two;
Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan.
Bullied and damned at since the voyage began,
"Being neither man nor seaman by his tally,"
He bunked with the idlers just abaft the galley.

His work began at five; he worked all day,
Keeping no watch and having all night in.
His work was what the mate might care to say;
He mixed red lead in many a bouilli tin;
His dungarees were smeared with paraffin.
"Go drown himself" his round-house mates advised him,
And all hands called him "Dauber" and despised him.

Si, the apprentice, stood beside the spar,
Stripped to the waist, a basin at his side,
Slushing his hands to get away the tar,
And then he washed himself and rinsed and dried;
Towelling his face, hair-towzelled, eager eyed,
He crossed the spar to Dauber, and there stood
Watching the gold of heaven turn to blood.

They stood there by the rail while the swift ship
Tore on out of the tropics, straining her sheets,
Whitening her trackway to a milky strip,
Dim with green bubbles and twisted water meets,
Her clacking tackle tugged at pins and cleats,

Her great sails bellied stiff, her great masts leaned:
They watched how the seas struck and burst and greened.

Si talked with Dauber, standing by the side.
"Why did you come to sea, painter?" he said.
"I want to be a painter," he replied,
"And know the sea and ships from A to Z,
And paint great ships at sea before I'm dead;
Ships under skysails running down the Trade —
Ships and the sea; there's nothing finer made.

"But there's so much to learn, with sails and ropes,
And how the sails look, full or being furled,

And how the lights change in the troughs
and slopes,
And the sea's colours up and down the
world,
And how a storm looks when the sprays
are hurled
High as the yard (they say) I want to see;
There's none ashore can teach such things
to me.

"And then the men and rigging, and the way
Ships move, running or beating, and the
poise
At the roll's end, the checking in the sway —
I want to paint them perfect, short of the
noise;
And then the life, the half-decks full of boys,
The fo'c'sles with the men there, dripping
wet:
I know the subjects that I want to get.

"It's not been done, the sea, not yet been done,
From the inside, by one who really knows;
I'd give up all if I could be the one,
But art comes dear the way the money goes.
So I have come to sea, and I suppose
Three years will teach me all I want to learn
And make enough to keep me till I earn."

Even as he spoke his busy pencil moved,
Drawing the leap of water off the side
Where the great clipper trampled iron-hooved,
Making the blue hills of the sea divide,
Shearing a glittering scatter in her stride,
And leaping on full tilt with all sails drawing,
Proud as a war-horse, snuffing battle, pawing.

"I cannot get it yet — not yet," he said;
"That leap and light, and sudden change
to green,
And all the glittering from the sunset's red,
And the milky colours where the bursts
have been,
And then the clipper striding like a queen
Over it all, all beauty to the crown.
I see it all, I cannot put it down.

"It's hard not to be able. There, look
there!
I cannot get the movement nor the light;
Sometimes it almost makes a man despair
To try and try and never get it right.
Oh, if I could — oh, if I only might,
I wouldn't mind what hells I'd have to
pass,
Not if the whole world called me fool and
ass."

Down sank the crimson sun into the sea,
The wind cut chill at once, the west grew dun.
"Out sidelights!" called the mate. "Hi, where is he?"
The Boatswain called, "Out sidelights, damn you! Run!"
"He's always late or lazing," murmured one —
"The Dauber, with his sketching." Soon the tints
Of red and green passed on dark water-glints.

Darker it grew, still darker, and the stars
Burned golden, and the fiery fishes came.
The wire-note loudened from the straining spars;
The sheet-blocks clacked together always the same;

The rushing fishes streaked the seas with
flame,
Racing the one speed noble as their own:
What unknown joy was in those fish un-
known!

Just by the round-house door, as it grew dark,
The Boatswain caught the Dauber with,
"Now, you;
Till now I've spared you, damn you! now
you hark:
I've just had hell for what you didn't do;
I'll have you broke and sent among the
crew
If you get me more trouble by a particle.
Don't you forget, you daubing, useless
article!

"You thing, you twice-laid thing from Port
Mahon!"

Then came the Cook's "Is that the Dauber there?
Why don't you leave them stinking paints alone?
They stink the house out, poisoning all the air.
Just take them out." "Where to?" "I don't care where.
I won't have stinking paint here." From their plates:
"That's right; wet paint breeds fever," growled his mates.

He took his still wet drawings from the berth
And climbed the ladder to the deck-house top;
Beneath, the noisy half-deck rang with mirth,
For two ship's boys were putting on the strop:
One, clambering up to let the skylight drop,

Saw him bend down beneath a boat and lay
His drawings there, till all were hid away,

And stand there silent, leaning on the boat,
Watching the constellations rise and burn,
Until the beauty took him by the throat,
So stately is their glittering overturn;
Armies of marching eyes, armies that yearn
With banners rising and falling, and passing by
Over the empty silence of the sky.

The Dauber sighed there looking at the sails,
Wind-steadied arches leaning on the night,
The high trucks traced on heaven and left no trails;
The moonlight made the topsails almost white,
The passing sidelight seemed to drip green light.

And on the clipper rushed with fire-bright
bows;
He sighed, "I'll never do't," and left the
house.

"Now," said the reefer, "up! Come, Sam; come, Si,
Dauber's been hiding something." Up they slid,
Treading on naked tiptoe stealthily
To grope for treasure at the long-boat skid.
"Drawings!" said Sam. "Is this what Dauber hid?
Lord! I expected pudding, not this rot.
Still, come, we'll have some fun with what we've got."

They smeared the paint with turpentine until
They could remove with mess-clouts every trace

Of quick perception caught by patient skill,
And lines that had brought blood into his face.
They wiped the pigments off, and did erase,
With knives, all sticking clots. When they had done.
Under the boat they laid them every one.

All he had drawn since first he came to sea,
His six weeks' leisure fruits, they laid them there.
They chuckled then to think how mad he'd be
Finding his paintings vanished into air.
Eight bells were struck, and feet from everywhere
Went shuffling aft to muster in the dark;
The mate's pipe glowed above, a dim red spark.

Names in the darkness passed and voices
cried;
The red spark glowed and died, the faces
seemed
As things remembered when a brain has
died,
To all but high intenseness deeply dreamed.
Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,
And on the clipper rushed with tossing
mast,
A bath of flame broke round her as she
passed.

The watch was set, the night came, and
the men
Hid from the moon in shadowed nooks to
sleep,
Bunched like the dead; still, like the dead,
as when
Plague in a city leaves none even to weep.

The ship's track brightened to a mile-
broad sweep;
The mate there felt her pulse, and eyed
the spars:
South-west by south she staggered under
the stars.

Down in his bunk the Dauber lay awake
Thinking of his unfitness for the sea.
Each failure, each derision, each mistake,
There in the life not made for such as he;
A morning grim with trouble sure to be,
A noon of pain from failure, and a night
Bitter with men's contemning and despite.

This in the first beginning, the green leaf,
Still in the Trades before bad weather fell;
What harvest would he reap of hate and
grief
When the loud Horn made every life a hell?

When the sick ship lay over, clanging her bell,
And no time came for painting or for drawing,
But all hands fought, and icy death came clawing?

Hell, he expected, — hell. His eyes grew blind;
The snoring from his messmates droned and snuffled,
And then a gush of pity calmed his mind.
The cruel torment of his thought was muffled,
Without, on deck, an old, old, seaman shuffled,
Humming his song, and through the open door
A moonbeam moved and thrust along the floor.

The green bunk curtains moved, the brass
rings clicked,
The Cook cursed in his sleep, turning and
turning,
The moonbeams' moving finger touched
and picked,
And all the stars in all the sky were burn-
ing.
"This is the art I've come for, and am
learning,
The sea and ships and men and travelling
things.
It is most proud, whatever pain it brings."

He leaned upon his arm and watched the
light
Sliding and fading to the steady roll;
This he would some day paint, the ship
at night,
And sleeping seamen tired to the soul;

The space below the bunks as black as coal,
Gleams upon chests, upon the unlit lamp,
The ranging door hook, and the locker clamp.

This he would paint, and that, and all these scenes,
And proud ships carrying on, and men their minds,
And blues of rollers toppling into greens,
And shattering into white that bursts and blinds,
And scattering ships running erect like hinds,
And men in oilskins beating down a sail
High on the yellow yard, in snow, in hail.

With faces ducked down from the slanting drive
Of half-thawed hail mixed with half-frozen spray,

The roaring canvas like a thing alive,
Shaking the mast, knocking their hands
away,
The foot-ropes jerking to the tug and sway,
The savage eyes salt-reddened at the rims,
And icicles on the south-wester brims.

And sunnier scenes would grow under his
brush,
The tropic dawn with all things dropping
dew,
The darkness and the wonder and the hush,
The insensate grey before the marvel grew;
Then the veil lifted from the trembling blue,
The walls of sky burst in, the flower, the
rose,
All the expanse of heaven a mind that glows.

He turned out of his bunk; the Cook still
tossed,

One of the other two spoke in his sleep.
A cockroach scuttled where the moonbeam
crossed;
Outside there was the ship, the night, the
deep.
"It is worth while," the youth said; "I
will keep
To my resolve, I'll learn to paint all this.
My Lord, my God, how beautiful it is!"

Outside was the ship's rush to the wind's
hurry,
A resonant wire-hum from every rope,
The broadening bow-wash in a fiery flurry,
The leaning masts in their majestic slope,
And all things strange with moonlight:
filled with hope
By all that beauty going as man bade,
He turned and slept in peace. Eight bells
were made.

II

NEXT day was Sunday, his free painting
day,
While the fine weather held, from eight
till eight.
He rose when called at five, and did array
The round-house gear, and set the kit-bags
straight;
Then kneeling down, like housemaid at a
grate,
He scrubbed the deck with sand until his
knees
Were blue with dye from his wet dungarees.

Soon all was clean, his Sunday tasks were
done;
His day was clear for painting as he chose.
The wetted decks were drying in the
sun,

The men coiled up, or swabbed, or sought
repose.
The drifts of silver arrows fell and rose
As flying fish took wing; the breakfast
passed,
Wasting good time, but he was free at last.

Free for two hours and more to tingle deep,
Catching a likeness in a line or tint,
The canvas running up in a proud sweep,
Wind-wrinkled at the clews, and white
like lint,
The glittering of the blue waves into glint;
Free to attempt it all, the proud ship's
pawings,
The sea, the sky — he went to fetch his
drawings.

Up to the deck-house top he quickly
climbed,

He stooped to find them underneath the boat.

He found them all obliterated, slimed,

Blotted, erased, gone from him line and note.

They were all spoiled: a lump came in his throat,

Being vain of his attempts, and tender skinned —

Beneath the skylight watching reefers grinned.

He clambered down, holding the ruined things.

"Bosun," he called, "look here, did you do these:

Wipe off my paints and cut them into strings,

And smear them till you can't tell chalk from cheese?

Don't stare, but did you do it? Answer,
please."
The Bosun turned: "I'll give you a thick
ear!
Do it? I didn't. Get to hell from here!

"I touch your stinking daubs? The
Dauber's daft."
A crowd was gathering now to hear the
fun;
The reefers tumbled out, the men laid aft,
The Cook blinked, cleaning a mess kid in
the sun.
"What's up with Dauber now?" said every-
one.
"Someone has spoiled my drawings — look
at this!"
"Well, that's a dirty trick, by God, it is!"

"It is," said Sam, "a low-down dirty trick,

To spoil a fellow's work in such a way,
And if you catch him, Dauber, punch him sick,
For he deserves it, be he who he may."
A seaman shook his old head wise and grey.
"It seems to me," he said, "who ain't no judge,
Them drawings look much better now they're smudge."

"Where were they, Dauber? On the deck-house? Where?"
"Under the long-boat, in a secret place."
"The blackguard must have seen you put them there.
He is a swine! I tell him to his face:
I didn't think we'd anyone so base."
"Nor I," said Dauber. "There was six weeks' time
Just wasted in these drawings: it's a crime!"

"Well, don't you say we did it," growled
his mates,
"And as for crime, be damned! the things
were smears —
Best overboard, like you, with shot for
weights;
Thank God they're gone, and now go shake
your ears."
The Dauber listened, very near to tears.
"Dauber, if I were you," said Sam again,
"I'd aft, and see the Captain and com-
plain."

A sigh came from the assembled seamen
there.
Would he be such a fool for their delight
As go to tell the Captain? Would he
dare?
And would the thunder roar, the lightning
smite?

There was the Captain come to take a sight,
Handling his sextant by the chart-house aft.
The Dauber turned, the seamen thought
him daft.

The Captain took his sights — a mate be-
low
Noted the times; they shouted to each
other,
The Captain quick with "Stop," the answer
slow,
Repeating slowly one height then another.
The swooping clipper stumbled through
the smother,
The ladder brasses in the sunlight burned,
The Dauber waited till the Captain turned.

There stood the Dauber, humbled to the
bone,
Waiting to speak. The Captain let him wait,

Glanced at the course, and called in even tone,
"What is the man there wanting, Mr. Mate?"
The logship clattered on the grating straight,
The reel rolled to the scuppers with a clatter,
The Mate came grim: "Well, Dauber, what's the matter?"

"Please, sir, they spoiled my drawings."
"Who did?" "They."
"Who's they?" "I don't quite know, sir."
"Don't quite know, sir?
Then why are you aft to talk about it, hey?
Whom d'you complain of?" "No one."
"No one?" "No, sir."
"Well, then, go forward till you've found them. Go, sir.
If you complain of someone, then I'll see.

Now get to hell! and don't come bothering me."

"But, sir, they washed them off, and some they cut.
Look here, sir, how they spoiled them."
"Never mind.
Go shove your head inside the scuttle butt,
And that will make you cooler. You will find
Nothing like water when you're mad and blind.
Where were the drawings? in your chest, or where?"
"Under the long-boat, sir; I put them there."

"Under the long-boat, hey? Now mind your tip.
I'll have the skids kept clear with nothing round them;

The long-boat ain't a store in this here ship.
Lucky for you it wasn't I who found them.
If I had seen them, Dauber, I'd have drowned
them.
Now you be warned by this. I tell you
plain —
Don't stow your brass-rags under boats
again.

"Go forward to your berth." The Dauber
turned.
The listeners down below them winked and
smiled,
Knowing how red the Dauber's temples
burned,
Having lost the case about his only child.
His work was done to nothing and defiled,
And there was no redress: the Captain's voice
Spoke, and called "Painter," making him
rejoice.

The Captain and the Mate conversed together.

"Drawings, you tell me, Mister?" "Yes, sir; views:

Wiped off with turps, I gather that's his blether.

He says they're things he can't afford to lose.

He's Dick, who came to sea in dancing shoes,

And found the dance a bear dance. They were hidden

Under the long-boat's chocks, which I've forbidden."

"Wiped off with turps?" The Captain sucked his lip.

"Who did it, Mister?" "Reefers, I suppose;

Them devils do the most pranks in a ship;

The round-house might have done it, Cook
or Bose."
"I can't take notice of it till he knows.
How does he do his work?" "Well, no
offence;
He tries; he does his best. He's got no
sense."

"Painter," the Captain called; the Dauber
came.
"What's all this talk of drawings? What's
the matter?"
"They spoiled my drawings, sir." "Well,
who's to blame?
The long-boat's there for no one to get at
her;
You broke the rules, and if you choose to
scatter
Gear up and down where it's no right to be,
And suffer as result, don't come to me.

"Your place is in the round-house, and your gear
Belongs where you belong. Who spoiled your things?
Find out who spoiled your things and fetch him here."
"But, sir, they cut the canvas into strings."
"I want no argument nor questionings.
Go back where you belong and say no more,
And please remember that you're not on shore."

The Dauber touched his brow and slunk away —
They eyed his going with a bitter eye.
"Dauber," said Sam, "what did the Captain say?"
The Dauber drooped his head without reply.
"Go forward, Dauber, and enjoy your cry."

The Mate limped to the rail; like little feet
Over his head the drumming reef-points beat.
The Dauber reached the berth and entered in.
Much mockery followed after as he went,
And each face seemed to greet him with the grin
Of hounds hot following on a creature spent.
"Aren't you a fool?" each mocking visage meant.
"Who did it, Dauber? What did Captain say?
It is a crime, and there'll be hell to pay."

He bowed his head, the house was full of smoke;
The Sails was pointing shackles on his chest.

"Lord, Dauber, be a man and take a joke" —
He puffed his pipe — "and let the matter rest.
Spit brown, my son, and get a hairy breast;
Get shoulders on you at the crojick braces,
And let this painting business go to blazes.

"What good can painting do to anyone?
I don't say never do it; far from that —
No harm in sometimes painting just for fun.
Keep it for fun, and stick to what you're at.
Your job's to fill your bones up and get fat;
Rib up like Barney's bull, and thick your neck.
Throw paints to hell, boy; you belong on deck."

"That's right," said Chips; "it's down-
right good advice.
Painting's no good; what good can paint-
ing do
Up on a lower topsail stiff with ice,
With all your little fish-hooks frozen blue?
Painting won't help you at the weather
clew,
Nor pass your gaskets for you, nor make
sail.
Painting's a balmy job not worth a nail."

The Dauber did not answer; time was pass-
ing.
He pulled his easel out, his paints, his stool.
The wind was dropping, and the sea was
glassing —
New realms of beauty waited for his rule:
The draught out of the crojick kept him
cool.

He sat to paint, alone and melancholy.
"No turning fools," the Chips said, "from
their folly."

He dipped his brush and tried to fix a line,
And then came peace, and gentle beauty came,
Turning his spirit's water into wine,
Lightening his darkness with a touch of
flame:
O, joy of trying for beauty, ever the same,
You never fail, your comforts never end;
O, balm of this world's way; O, perfect
friend!

III

They lost the Trades soon after; then
came calm,
Light little gusts and rain, which soon in-
creased

To glorious northers shouting out a psalm
At seeing the bright blue water silver
fleeced;
Hornwards she rushed, trampling the seas
to yeast.
There fell a rain-squall in a blind day's end
When for an hour the Dauber found a
friend.

Out of the rain the voices called and passed,
The stay-sails flogged, the tackle yanked
and shook.
Inside the harness-room a lantern cast
Light and wild shadows as it ranged its
hook.
The watch on deck was gathered in the
nook,
They had taken shelter in that secret place,
Wild light gave wild emotions to each
face.

One beat the beef-cask, and the others sang
A song that had brought anchors out of seas
In ports where bells of Christians never rang,
Nor any sea mark blazed among the trees.
By forlorn swamps, in ice, by windy keys,
That song had sounded; now it shook the air
From these eight wanderers brought together there.

Under the poop-break, sheltering from the rain,
The Dauber sketched some likeness of the room,
A note to be a prompting to his brain,
A spark to make old memory reillume.
"Dauber," said someone near him in the gloom,

"How goes it, Dauber?" It was reefer Si.

"There's not much use in trying to keep dry."

They sat upon the sail-room doorway coaming,
The lad held forth like youth, the Dauber listened
To how the boy had had a taste for roaming,
And what the sea is said to be and isn't.
Where the dim lamplight fell the wet deck glistened.
Si said the Horn was still some weeks away,
"But tell me, Dauber, where d'you hail from? Eh?"

The rain blew past and let the stars appear;
The seas grew larger as the moonlight grew;

For half an hour the ring of heaven was clear,
Dusty with moonlight, grey rather than blue;
In that great moon the showing stars were few.
The sleepy time-boy's feet passed overhead.
"I come from out past Gloucester," Dauber said;

"Not far from Pauntley, if you know those parts;
The place is Spital Farm, near Silver Hill,
Above a trap-hatch where a mill-stream starts.
We had the mill once, but we've stopped the mill;
My dad and sister keep the farm on still.
We're only tenants, but we've rented there,
Father and son, for over eighty year.

"Father has worked the farm since grandfer went;
It means the world to him; I can't think why.
They bleed him to the last half-crown for rent,
And this and that have almost milked him dry.
The land's all starved; if he'd put money by,
And corn was up, and rent was down two-thirds. . . .
But then they aren't, so what's the use of words.

"Yet still he couldn't bear to see it pass
To strangers, or to think a time would come
When other men than us would mow the grass,
And other names than ours have the home.

Some sorrows come from evil thought, but some
Comes when two men are near, and both are blind
To what is generous in the other's mind.

"I was the only boy, and father thought
I'd farm the Spital after he was dead,
And many a time he took me out and taught
About manures and seed-corn white and red,
And soils and hops, but I'd an empty head;
Harvest or seed, I would not do a turn —
I loathed the farm, I didn't want to learn.

"He did not mind at first, he thought it youth
Feeling the collar, and that I should change.
Then time gave him some inklings of the truth,

And that I loathed the farm, and wished
to range.
Truth to a man of fifty's always strange;
It was most strange and terrible to him
That I, his heir, should be the devil's limb.

"Yet still he hoped the Lord might change
my mind.
I'd see him bridle-in his wrath and hate,
And almost break my heart he was so kind,
Biting his lips sore with resolve to wait.
And then I'd try awhile; but it was Fate:
I didn't want to learn; the farm to me
Was mire and hopeless work and misery.

"Though there were things I loved about
it, too —
The beasts, the apple-trees, and going hay-
ing.
And then I tried; but no, it wouldn't do,

The farm was prison, and my thoughts
were straying.
And there'd come father, with his grey head,
praying,
'O, my dear son, don't let the Spital pass;
It's my old home, boy, where your grand-
fer was.

"'And now you won't learn farming; you
don't care.
The old home's nought to you. I've tried
to teach you;
I've begged Almighty God, boy, all I dare,
To use His hand if word of mine won't
reach you.
Boy, for your granfer's sake I do beseech
you,
Don't let the Spital pass to strangers. Squire
Has said he'd give it you if we require.

"'Your mother used to walk here, boy,
with me;
It was her favourite walk down to the mill;
And there we'd talk how little death would be,
Knowing our work was going on here still.
You've got the brains, you only want the
will —
Don't disappoint your mother and your
father.
I'll give you time to travel, if you'd rather.'

"But, no, I'd wander up the brooks to read.
Then sister Jane would start with nagging
tongue,
Saying my sin made father's heart to bleed,
And how she feared she'd live to see me
hung.
And then she'd read me bits from Dr. Young.
And when we three would sit to supper, Jane
Would fillip dad till dad began again.

"'I've been here all my life, boy. I was born
Up in the room above — looks on the mead.
I never thought you'd cockle my clean corn,
And leave the old home to a stranger's seed.
Father and I have made here 'thout a weed:
We've give our lives to make that. Eighty years.
And now I go down to the grave in tears.'

"And then I'd get ashamed and take off coat,
And work maybe a week, ploughing and sowing
And then I'd creep away and sail my boat,
Or watch the water when the mill was going.

That's my delight — to be near water flowing,
Dabbling or sailing boats or jumping stanks,
Or finding moorhens' nests along the banks.

"And one day father found a ship I'd built;
He took the cart-whip to me over that,
And I, half mad with pain, and sick with guilt,
Went up and hid in what we called the flat,
A dusty hole given over to the cat.
She kittened there; the kittens had worn paths
Among the cobwebs, dust, and broken laths.

"And putting down my hand between the beams

I felt a leathery thing, and pulled it clear:
A book with white cocoons stuck in the seams.
Where spiders had had nests for many a year.
It was my mother's sketch-book; hid, I fear,
Lest dad should ever see it. Mother's life
Was not her own while she was father's wife.

"There were her drawings, dated, pencilled faint.
March was the last one, eighteen eighty-three,
Unfinished that, for tears had smeared the paint.
The rest was landscape, not yet brought to be.
That was a holy afternoon to me;

That book a sacred book; the flat a place
Where I could meet my mother face to face.

"She had found peace of spirit, mother had,
Drawing the landscape from the attic there —
Heart-broken, often, after rows with dad,
Hid like a wild thing in a secret lair.
That rotting sketch-book showed me how and where
I, too, could get away; and then I knew
That drawing was the work I longed to do.

"Drawing became my life. I drew, I toiled,
And every penny I could get I spent
On paints and artist's matters, which I spoiled
Up in the attic to my heart's content,
Till one day father asked me what I meant;

The time had come, he said, to make an
end.
Now it must finish: what did I intend?

"Either I took to farming, like his son,
In which case he would teach me, early
and late
(Provided that my daubing mood was done),
Or I must go: it must be settled straight.
If I refused to farm, there was the gate.
I was to choose, his patience was all gone,
The present state of things could not go on.

"Sister was there; she eyed me while he
spoke.
The kitchen clock ran down and struck the
hour,
And something told me father's heart was
broke,
For all he stood so set and looked so sour.

Jane took a duster, and began to scour
A pewter on the dresser; she was crying.
I stood stock still a long time, not replying.

"Dad waited, then he snorted and turned round.
'Well, think of it,' he said. He left the room,
His boots went clop along the stony ground
Out to the orchard and the apple-bloom.
A cloud came past the sun and made a gloom;
I swallowed with dry lips, then sister turned.
She was dead white but for her eyes that burned.

"'You're breaking father's heart, Joe,' she began;
'It's not as if ——' she checked, in too much pain.
'O, Joe, don't help to kill so fine a man;

You're giving him our mother over again.
It's wearing him to death, Joe, heart and
brain;
You know what store he sets on leaving
this
To (it's too cruel) — to a son of his.

"'Yet you go painting all the day. O,
Joe,
Couldn't you make an effort? Can't you
see
What folly it is of yours? It's not as
though
You are a genius or could ever be.
O, Joe, for father's sake, if not for me,
Give up this craze for painting, and be wise
And work with father, where your duty
lies.'

"'It goes too deep,' I said; 'I loathe the
farm;

I couldn't help, even if I'd the mind.
Even if I helped, I'd only do him harm;
Father would see it, if he were not blind.
I was not built to farm, as he would find.
O, Jane, it's bitter hard to stand alone
And spoil my father's life or spoil my own.'

"'Spoil both,' she said, 'the way you're shaping now.
You're only a boy not knowing your own good.
Where will you go, suppose you leave here? How
Do you propose to earn your daily food?
Draw? Daub the pavements? There's a feckless brood
Goes to the devil daily, Joe, in cities
Only from thinking how divine their wit is.

"'Clouds are they, without water, carried away.'

And you'll be one of them, the way you're
going,
Daubing at silly pictures all the day,
And praised by silly fools who're always
blowing.
And you choose this when you might go
a-sowing,
Casting the good corn into chosen mould
That shall in time bring forth a hundred-
fold.'

"So we went on, but in the end it ended.
I felt I'd done a murder; I felt sick.
There's much in human minds cannot be
mended,
And that, not I, played dad a cruel trick.
There was one mercy: that it ended quick.
I went to join my mother's brother: he
Lived down the Severn. He was kind to
me.

"And there I learned house-painting for
a living.
I'd have been happy there, but that I knew
I'd sinned before my father past for-
giving,
And that they sat at home, that silent two,
Wearing the fire out and the evening
through,
Silent, defeated, broken, in despair,
My plate unset, my name gone, and my
chair.

"I saw all that; and sister Jane came
white —
White as a ghost, with fiery, weeping
eyes.
I saw her all day long and half the night,
Bitter as gall, and passionate and wise.
'Joe, you have killed your father: there
he lies.

You have done your work — you with our
mother's ways.'
She said it plain, and then her eyes would
blaze.

"And then one day I had a job to do
Down below bridge, by where the docks
begin,
And there I saw a clipper towing through,
Up from the sea that morning, entering in.
Raked to the nines she was, lofty and thin,
Her ensign ruffling red, her bunts in pile,
Beauty and strength together, wonder, style.

"She docked close to the gates, and there
she lay
Over the water from me, well in sight;
And as I worked I watched her all the day,
Finding her beauty ever fresh delight.
Her house-flag was bright green with strips
of white;

High in the sunny air it rose to shake
Above the skysail poles' most splendid
rake.

"And when I felt unhappy I would look
Over the river at her; and her pride,
So calm, so quiet, came as a rebuke
To half the passionate pathways which I
tried;
And though the autumn ran its term and
died,
And winter fell and cold December came,
She was still splendid there, and still the
same.

"Then on a day she sailed; but when she
went
My mind was clear on what I had to try:
To see the sea and ships, and what they
meant,

That was the thing I longed to do; so I
Drew and worked hard, and studied and put by,
And thought of nothing else but that one end,
But let all else go hang — love, money, friend.

"And now I've shipped as Dauber I've begun.
It was hard work to find a dauber's berth;
I hadn't any friends to find me one,
Only my skill, for what it may be worth;
But I'm at sea now, going about the earth,
And when the ship's paid off, when we return,
I'll join some Paris studio and learn."

He stopped, the air came moist, Si did not speak;

The Dauber turned his eyes to where he
sat,
Pressing the sail-room hinges with his
cheek,
His face half covered with a drooping
hat.
Huge dewdrops from the stay-sails dropped
and spat.
Si did not stir, the Dauber touched his
sleeve;
A little birdlike noise came from a sheave.

Si was asleep, sleeping a calm deep sleep,
Still as a warden of the Egyptian dead
In some old haunted temple buried deep
Under the desert sand, sterile and red.
The Dauber shook his arm; Si jumped and
said,
"Good yarn, I swear! I say, you have a
brain —

Was that eight bells that went?" He slept again.

Then waking up, "I've had a nap," he cried.
"Was that one bell? What, Dauber, you still here?"
"Si there?" the Mate's voice called. "Sir," he replied.
The order made the lad's thick vision clear;
A something in the Mate's voice made him fear.
"Si," said the Mate, "I hear you've made a friend —
Dauber, in short. That friendship's got to end.

"You're a young gentleman. Your place aboard
Is with the gentlemen abaft the mast.
You're learning to command; you can't afford

To yarn with any man. But there . . .
it's past.
You've done it once; let this time be the
last.
The Dauber's place is forward. Do it
again,
I'll put you bunking forward with the men.

"Dismiss." Si went, but Sam, beside the
Mate,
Timekeeper there, walked with him to the
rail
And whispered him the menace of "You
wait" —
Words which have turned full many a reefer
pale.
The watch was changed; the watch on deck
trimmed sail.
Sam, going below, called all the reefers
down,

Sat in his bunk and eyed them with a frown.

"Si here," he said, "has soiled the half-deck's name
Talking to Dauber — Dauber, the ship's clout.
A reefer takes the Dauber for a flame,
The half-deck take the round-house walking out.
He's soiled the half-deck's honour; now, no doubt,
The Bosun and his mates will come here sneaking,
Asking for smokes, or blocking gangways speaking.

"I'm not a vain man, given to blow or boast;
I'm not a proud man, but I truly feel
That while I've bossed this mess and ruled this roast

I've kept this hooker's half-deck damned
genteel.
Si must ask pardon, or be made to squeal.
Down on your knees, dog; them we love
we chasten.
Jao, pasea, my son — in English, Hasten."

Si begged for pardon, meekly kneeling
down
Before the reefer's mess assembled grim.
The lamp above them smoked the glass all
brown;
Beyond the door the dripping sails were
dim.
The Dauber passed the door; none spoke
to him.
He sought his berth and slept, or, waking,
heard
Rain on the deck-house — rain, no other
word.

IV

Out of the air a time of quiet came,
Calm fell upon the heaven like a drouth;
The brass sky watched the brassy water flame.
Drowsed as a snail the clipper loitered south
Slowly, with no white bone across her mouth;
No rushing glory, like a queen made bold,
The Dauber strove to draw her as she rolled.

There the four leaning spires of canvas rose,
Royals and skysails lifting, gently lifting,
White like the brightness that a great fish blows
When billows are at peace and ships are drifting;

With mighty jerks that set the shadows shifting,
The courses tugged their tethers: a blue haze
Drifted like ghosts of flocks come down to graze.

There the great skyline made her perfect round,
Notched now and then by the sea's deeper blue;
A smoke-smutch marked a steamer homeward bound,
The haze wrought all things to intenser hue.
In tingling impotence the Dauber drew
As all men draw, keen to the shaken soul
To give a hint that might suggest the whole.

A naked seaman washing a red shirt
Sat at a tub whistling between his teeth;
Complaining blocks quavered like something hurt.
A sailor cut an old boot for a sheath,
The ship bowed to her shadow-ship beneath,
And little slaps of spray came at the roll
On to the deck-planks from the scupper-hole.

He watched it, painting patiently, as paints,
With eyes that pierce behind the blue sky's veil,
The Benedictine in a Book of Saints
Watching the passing of the Holy Grail;
The green dish dripping blood, the trump, the hail,
The spears that pass, the memory and the passion,

The beauty moving under this world's
fashion.

But as he painted, slowly, man by man,
The seamen gathered near; the Bosun stood
Behind him, jeering; then the Sails began
Sniggering with comment that it was not
good.
Chips flicked his sketch with little scraps
of wood,
Saying, "That hit the top-knot," every
time.
Cook mocked, "My lovely drawings; it's
a crime."

Slowly the men came nearer, till a crowd
Stood at his elbow, muttering as he drew;
The Bosun, turning to them, spoke aloud,
"This is the ship that never got there.
You
Look at her here, what Dauber's trying to do.

Look at her! lummy, like a Christmas-tree.
That thing's a ship; he calls this painting.
See?"

Seeing the crowd, the Mate came forward;
then
"Sir," said the Bosun, "come and see the
sight!
Here's Dauber makes a circus for the men.
He calls this thing a ship — this hell's
delight!"
"Man," said the Mate, "you'll never get
her right
Daubing like that. Look here!" He
took a brush.
"Now, Dauber, watch; I'll put you to the
blush.

"Look here. Look there. Now watch this
ship of mine."

He drew her swiftly from a memory stored.
"God, sir," the Bosun said, "you do her fine!"
"Ay," said the Mate, "I do so, by the Lord!
I'll paint a ship with any man aboard."
They hung about his sketch like beasts at bait.
"There now, I taught him painting," said the Mate.

When he had gone, the gathered men dispersed;
Yet two or three still lingered to dispute
What errors made the Dauber's work the worst.
They probed his want of knowledge to the root.
"Bei Gott!" they swore, "der Dauber cannot do 't;
He haf no knolich how to put der pense.

Der Mate's is goot. Der Dauber haf no
sense."

"You hear?" the Bosun cried, "you can-
not do it!"
"A gospel truth," the Cook said, "true
as hell!
And wisdom, Dauber, if you only knew it;
A five year boy would do a ship as well."
"If that's the kind of thing you hope to sell,
God help you," echoed Chips. "I tell
you true,
The job's beyond you, Dauber; drop it,
do.

"Drop it, in God's name drop it, and have
done!
You see you cannot do it. Here's the
Mate
Paints you to frazzles before everyone;

Paints you a dandy clipper while you wait.
While you, Lord love us, daub. I tell you straight,
We've had enough of daubing; drop it; quit.
You cannot paint, so make an end of it."

"That's sense," said all; "you cannot, why pretend?"
The Dauber rose and put his easel by.
"You've said enough," he said, "now let it end.
Who cares how bad my painting may be? I
Mean to go on, and, if I fail, to try.
However much I miss of my intent,
If I have done my best I'll be content.

"You cannot understand that. Let it be.
You cannot understand, nor know, nor share.

This is a matter touching only me;
My sketch may be a daub, for aught I
care.
You may be right. But even if you were,
Your mocking should not stop this work
of mine;
Rot though it be, its prompting is divine.

"You cannot understand that — you, and
you,
And you, you Bosun. You can stand and
jeer,
That is the task your spirit fits you to,
That you can understand and hold most
dear.
Grin, then, like collars, ear to donkey ear,
But let me daub. Try, you, to under-
stand
Which task will bear the light best on God's
hand."

V

The wester came as steady as the Trades;
Brightly it blew, and still the ship did shoulder
The brilliance of the water's white cockades
Into the milky green of smoky smoulder.
The sky grew bluer and the air grew colder.
Southward she thundered while the westers held,
Proud, with taut bridles, pawing, but compelled.

And still the Dauber strove, though all men mocked,
To draw the splendour of the passing thing,
And deep inside his heart a something locked,
Long pricking in him, now began to sting —
A fear of the disasters storm might bring;

His rank as painter would be ended then —
He would keep watch and watch like other men.

And go aloft with them to man the yard
When the great ship was rolling scuppers under,
Burying her snout all round the compass card,
While the green water struck at her and stunned her;
When the lee-rigging slacked, when one long thunder
Boomed from the black to windward, when the sail
Booted and spurred the devil in the gale

For him to ride on men: that was the time
The Dauber dreaded; then the test would come,

When seas, half-frozen, slushed the decks
with slime,
And all the air was blind with flying scum;
When the drenched sails were furled, when
the fierce hum
In weather riggings died into the roar
Of God's eternal never tamed by shore.

Once in the passage he had worked aloft,
Shifting her suits one summer afternoon,
In the bright Trade wind, when the wind
was soft,
Shaking the points, making the tackle
croon.
But that was child's play to the future: soon
He would be ordered up when sails and
spars
Were flying and going mad among the
stars.

He had been scared that first time, daunted,
thrilled,
Not by the height so much as by the size,
And then the danger to the man unskilled
In standing on a rope that runs through eyes.
"But in a storm," he thought, "the yards
will rise
And roll together down, and snap their
gear!"
The sweat came cold upon his palms for fear.

Sometimes in Gloucester he had felt a pang
Swinging below the house-eaves on a stage.
But stages carry rails; here he would hang
Upon a jerking rope in a storm's rage,
Ducked that the sheltering oilskin might
assuage
The beating of the storm, clutching the
jack,
Beating the sail, and being beaten back.

Drenched, frozen, gasping, blinded, beaten dumb,
High in the night, reeling great blinding arcs
As the ship rolled, his chappy fingers numb,
The deck below a narrow blur of marks,
The sea a welter of whiteness shot with sparks,
Now snapping up in bursts, now dying away,
Salting the horizontal snow with spray.

A hundred and fifty feet above the deck,
And there, while the ship rolls, boldly to sit
Upon a foot-rope moving, jerk and check,
While half a dozen seamen work on it;
Held by one hand, straining, by strength and wit
To toss a gasket's coil around the yard,

How could he compass that when blowing
hard?

And if he failed in any least degree,
Or faltered for an instant, or showed slack,
He might go drown himself within the sea,
And add a bubble to the clipper's track.
He had signed his name, there was no turning back,
No pardon for default — this must be done.
One iron rule at sea binds everyone.

Till now he had been treated with contempt
As neither man nor thing, a creature borne
On the ship's articles, but left exempt
From all the seamen's life except their scorn.
But he would rank as seaman off the Horn,
Work as a seaman, and be kept or cast
By standards set for men before the mast.

Even now they shifted suits of sails; they bent
The storm-suit ready for the expected time;
The mighty wester that the Plate had lent
Had brought them far into the wintry clime.
At dawn, out of the shadow, there was rime,
The dim Magellan Clouds were frosty clear,
The wind had edge, the testing-time was near.

And then he wondered if the tales were lies
Told by old hands to terrify the new,
For, since the ship left England, only twice
Had there been need to start a sheet or clew,
Then only royals, for an hour or two,
And no seas broke aboard, nor was it cold.

What were these gales of which the stories told?

The thought went by. He had heard the Bosun tell
Too often, and too fiercely, not to know
That being off the Horn in June is hell:
Hell of continual toil in ice and snow,
Frostbitten hell in which the westers blow
Shrieking for days on end, in which the seas
Gulf the starved seamen till their marrows freeze.

Such was the weather he might look to find,
Such was the work expected: there remained
Firmly to set his teeth, resolve his mind,
And be the first, however much it pained,

And bring his honour round the Horn unstained,
And win his mates' respect; and thence, untainted,
Be ranked as man however much he painted.

He drew deep breath; a gantline swayed aloft
A lower topsail, hard with rope and leather,
Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft
Below the Ramirez in Cape Horn weather.
The arms upon the yard hove all together,
Lighting the head along; a thought occurred
Within the painter's brain like a bright bird:

That this, and so much like it, of man's toil,

Compassed by naked manhood in strange places,
Was all heroic, but outside the coil
Within which modern art gleams or grimaces;
That if he drew that line of sailor's faces
Sweating the sail, their passionate play and change,
It would be new, and wonderful, and strange.

That that was what his work meant; it would be
A training in new vision — a revealing
Of passionate men in battle with the sea,
High on an unseen stage, shaking and reeling;
And men through him would understand their feeling,

Their might, their misery, their tragic
power,
And all by suffering pain a little hour;

High on the yard with them, feeling their
pain,
Battling with them; and it had not been
done.
He was a door to new worlds in the brain,
A window opening letting in the sun,
A voice saying, "Thus is bread fetched
and ports won,
And life lived out at sea where men exist
Solely by man's strong brain and sturdy
wrist."

So he decided, as he cleaned his brasses,
Hearing without, aloft, the curse, the shout
Where the taut gantline passes and re-
passes,

Heaving new topsails to be lighted out.
It was most proud, however self might
doubt,
To share man's tragic toil and paint it true.
He took the offered Fate: this he would
do.

That night the snow fell between six and
seven,
A little feathery fall so light, so dry —
An aimless dust out of a confused heaven,
Upon an air no steadier than a sigh;
The powder dusted down and wandered by
So purposeless, so many, and so cold,
Then died, and the wind ceased and the
ship rolled.

Rolled till she clanged — rolled till the
brain was tired,
Marking the acme of the heaves, the
pause

While the sea-beauty rested and respired,
Drinking great draughts of roller at her hawse.
Flutters of snow came aimless upon flaws.
"Lock up your paints," the Mate said, speaking light:
"This is the Horn; you'll join my watch to-night!"

VI

All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves.
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the sheaves,

Startles of water made the swing ports
gush,
The sea was moaning and sighing and say-
ing "Hush!"

It was all black and starless. Peering
down
Into the water, trying to pierce the gloom,
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of
brown
Heaving and dying away and leaving
room
For yet another. Like the march of doom
Came those great powers of marching
silences;
Then fog came down, dead-cold, and hid
the seas.

They set the Dauber to the foghorn. There
He stood upon the poop, making to sound

Out of the pump the sailor's nasal blare,
Listening lest ice should make the note
resound.
She bayed there like a solitary hound
Lost in a covert; all the watch she
bayed.
The fog, come closelier down, no answer
made.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.
The elemental hid her; she was merged
In mufflings of dark death, like a man's
ghost,
New to the change of death, yet thither
urged.
Then from the hidden waters something
surged —
Mournful, despairing, great, greater than
speech,
A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again mournful, and still
Out of the night that mighty voice arose;
The Dauber at his foghorn felt the thrill.
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms were those?
Mournful, from things defeated, in the throes
Of memory of some conquered hunting-ground,
Out of the night of death arose the sound.

"Whales!" said the Mate. They stayed there all night long
Answering the horn. Out of the night they spoke,
Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong,
But were still noble underneath the stroke.
They filled the darkness when the Dauber woke;

The men came peering to the rail to hear,
And the sea sighed, and the fog rose up
sheer.

A wall of nothing at the world's last edge,
Where no life came except defeated life.
The Dauber felt shut in within a hedge,
Behind which form was hidden and thought
was rife,
And that a blinding flash, a thrust, a knife
Would sweep the hedge away and make
all plain,
Brilliant beyond all words, blinding the
brain.

So the night passed, but then no morning
broke —
Only a something showed that night was
dead.
A sea-bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,

And the fog drew away and hung like
lead.
Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red;
Like glowering gods at watch it did ap-
pear,
And sometimes drew away, and then drew
near.

Like islands, and like chasms, and like hell,
But always mighty and red, gloomy and
ruddy,
Shutting the visible sea in like a well;
Slow heaving in vast ripples, blank and
muddy,
Where the sun should have risen it streaked
bloody.
The day was still-born; all the sea-fowl
scattering
Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering,
clattering.

Then Polar snow came down little and
light,
Till all the sky was hidden by the small,
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white
Tumbling and wavering down and covering
all —
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,
Furring the ropes with white, casing the
mast,
Coming on no known air, but blowing past.

And all the air seemed full of gradual
moan,
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns
were blowing
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,
Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and
going.
Slow the low gradual moan came in the
snowing;

The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.
The snowstorm fluttered by; he saw the sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering prison
Into another, vaster and more grim,
Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen
To muffle-to a final door on him.
The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,
The pigeons chattered, quarrelling in the track.
In the south-west the dimness dulled to black.

Then came the cry of "Call all hands on deck!"
The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:
Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck,

And crumples steel and smites the strong
man dumb.
Down clattered flying kites and staysails: some
Sang out in quick, high calls: the fair-
leads skirled,
And from the south-west came the end of
the world.

"Caught in her ball-dress," said the Bosun, hauling;
"Lee-ay, lee-ay!" quick, high, came the men's call;
It was all wallop of sails and startled calling.
"Let fly!" "Let go!" "Clew up!" and "Let go all!"
"Now up and make them fast!" "Here, give us a haul!"
"Now up and stow them! Quick! By God! we're done!"

The blackness crunched all memory of the sun.

"Up!" said the Mate. "Mizen top-gallants. Hurry!"
The Dauber ran, the others ran, the sails
Slatted and shook; out of the black a flurry
Whirled in fine lines, tattering the edge to trails.
Painting and art and England were old tales
Told in some other life to that pale man,
Who struggled with white fear and gulped and ran.

He struck a ringbolt in his haste and fell —
Rose, sick with pain, half-lamed in his left knee;
He reached the shrouds where clambering men pell-mell

Hustled each other up and cursed him; he
Hurried aloft with them: then from the sea
Came a cold, sudden breath that made the hair
Stiff on the neck, as though Death whispered there.

A man below him punched him in the side.
"Get up, you Dauber, or let me get past."
He saw the belly of the skysail skied,
Gulped, and clutched tight, and tried to go more fast.
Sometimes he missed his ratline and was grassed,
Scraped his shin raw against the rigid line.
The clamberers reached the futtock-shrouds' incline.

Cursing they came; one, kicking out behind,
Kicked Dauber in the mouth, and one below
Punched at his calves; the futtock-shrouds inclined
It was a perilous path for one to go.
"Up, Dauber, up!" A curse followed a blow.
He reached the top and gasped, then on, then on.
And one voice yelled "Let go!" and one "All gone!"

Fierce clamberers, some in oilskins, some in rags,
Hustling and hurrying up, up the steep stairs.
Before the windless sails were blown to flags,

And whirled like dirty birds athwart great airs,
Ten men in all, to get this mast of theirs
Snugged to the gale in time. "Up! Damn
you, run!"
The mizen topmast head was safely won.

"Lay out!" the Bosun yelled. The Dauber
laid
Out on the yard, gripping the yard, and
feeling
Sick at the mighty space of air displayed
Below his feet, where mewing birds were
wheeling.
A giddy fear was on him; he was reeling.
He bit his lip half through, clutching the
jack.
A cold sweat glued the shirt upon his
back.

The yard was shaking, for a brace was
loose.

He felt that he would fall; he clutched,
he bent,
Clammy with natural terror to the shoes
While idiotic promptings came and went.
Snow fluttered on a wind-flaw and was
spent;
He saw the water darken. Someone yelled,
"Frap it; don't stay to furl! Hold on!"
He held.

Darkness came down — half darkness — in
a whirl;
The sky went out, the waters disappeared.
He felt a shocking pressure of blowing hurl
The ship upon her side. The darkness
speared
At her with wind; she staggered, she
careered,
Then down she lay. The Dauber felt her
go;

He saw his yard tilt downwards. Then the snow

Whirled all about — dense, multitudinous, cold —
Mixed with the wind's one devilish thrust and shriek,
Which whiffled out men's tears, deafened, took hold,
Flattening the flying drift against the cheek.
The yards buckled and bent, man could not speak.
The ship lay on her broadside; the wind's sound
Had devilish malice at having got her downed.

* * * * *

How long the gale had blown he could not tell,

Only the world had changed, his life had
died.
A moment now was everlasting hell.
Nature an onslaught from the weather
side,
A withering rush of death, a frost that
cried,
Shrieked, till he withered at the heart; a
hail
Plastered his oilskins with an icy mail.

"Cut!" yelled his mate. He looked — the
sail was gone,
Blown into rags in the first furious squall;
The tatters drummed the devil's tattoo.
On
The buckling yard a block thumped like
a mall.
The ship lay — the sea smote her, the
wind's bawl

Came, "loo, loo, loo!" The devil cried his hounds
On to the poor spent stag strayed in his bounds.

"Cut! Ease her!" yelled his mate; the Dauber heard.
His mate wormed up the tilted yard and slashed,
A rag of canvas skimmed like a darting bird.
The snow whirled, the ship bowed to it, the gear lashed,
The sea-tops were cut off and flung down smashed;
Tatters of shouts were flung, the rags of yells —
And clang, clang, clang, below beat the two bells.

"O God!" the Dauber moaned. A roaring rang,

Blasting the royals like a cannonade;
The backstays parted with a cracking clang,
The upper spars were snapped like twigs decayed—
Snapped at their heels, their jagged splinters splayed,
Like white and ghastly hair erect with fear.
The Mate yelled, "Gone, by God, and pitched them clear!"

"Up!" yelled the Bosun; "up and clear the wreck!"
The Dauber followed where he led: below
He caught one giddy glimpsing of the deck
Filled with white water, as though heaped with snow.
He saw the streamers of the rigging blow
Straight out like pennons from the splintered mast,
Then, all sense dimmed, all was an icy blast

Roaring from nether hell and filled with ice,
Roaring and crashing on the jerking stage,
An utter bridle given to utter vice,
Limitless power mad with endless rage
Withering the soul; a minute seemed an age.
He clutched and hacked at ropes, at rags of sail,
Thinking that comfort was a fairy-tale

Told long ago — long, long ago — long since
Heard of in other lives — imagined, dreamed —
There where the basest beggar was a prince
To him in torment where the tempest screamed,
Comfort and warmth and ease no longer seemed
Things that a man could know: soul, body, brain,

Knew nothing but the wind, the cold, the pain.

"Leave that!" the Bosun shouted; "Crojick save!"
The splitting crojick, not yet gone to rags,
Thundered below, beating till something gave,
Bellying between its buntlines into bags.
Some birds were blown past, shrieking: dark, like shags,
Their backs seemed, looking down. "Leu, leu!" they cried.
The ship lay, the seas thumped her; she had died.

They reached the crojick yard, which buckled, buckled
Like a thin whalebone to the topsail's strain.

They laid upon the yard and heaved and
knuckled,
Pounding the sail, which jangled and leapt
again.
It was quite hard with ice, its rope like
chain,
Its strength like seven devils; it shook the
mast.
They cursed and toiled and froze: a long
time passed.

Two hours passed, then a dim lightening
came.
Those frozen ones upon the yard could
see
The mainsail and the foresail still the same,
Still battling with the hands and blowing
free,
Rags tattered where the staysails used to
be.

The lower topsails stood; the ship's lee deck
Seethed with four feet of water filled with wreck.

An hour more went by; the Dauber lost
All sense of hands and feet, all sense of all
But of a wind that cut him to the ghost,
And of a frozen fold he had to haul,
Of heavens that fell and never ceased to fall,
And ran in smoky snatches along the sea,
Leaping from crest to wave-crest, yelling. He

Lost sense of time; no bells went, but he felt
Ages go over him. At last, at last
They frapped the cringled crojick's icy pelt;
In frozen bulge and bunt they made it fast.

Then, scarcely live, they laid in to the mast.
The Captain's speaking trumpet gave a blare,
"Make fast the topsail, Mister, while you're there."

Some seamen cursed, but up they had to go —
Up to the topsail yard to spend an hour
Stowing a topsail in a blinding snow,
Which made the strongest man among them cower.
More men came up, the fresh hands gave them power,
They stowed the sail; then with a rattle of chain
One half the crojick burst its bonds again.

* * * * *

They stowed the sail, frapping it round with rope,

Leaving no surface for the wind, no fold,
Then down the weather shrouds, half dead, they grope;
That struggle with the sail had made them old.
They wondered if the crojick furl would hold.
"Lucky," said one, "it didn't spring the spar."
"Lucky!" the Bosun said, "Lucky! We are!

She came within two shakes of turning top
Or stripping all her shroud-screws, that first quiff.
Now fish those wash-deck buckets out of the slop.
Here's Dauber says he doesn't like Cape Stiff.

This isn't wind, man, this is only a whiff.
Hold on, all hands, hold on!" a sea, half seen,
Paused, mounted, burst, and filled the main-deck green.

The Dauber felt a mountain of water fall.
It covered him deep, deep, he felt it fill,
Over his head, the deck, the fife-rails, all,
Quieting the ship, she trembled and lay still.
Then with a rush and shatter and clanging shrill
Over she went; he saw the water cream
Over the bitts; he saw the half-deck stream.

Then in the rush he swirled, over she went;
Her lee-rail dipped, he struck, and something gave;

His legs went through a port as the roll spent;
She paused, then rolled, and back the water drave.
He drifted with it as a part of the wave,
Drowning, half-stunned, exhausted, partly frozen,
He struck the booby hatchway; then the Bosun

Leaped, seeing his chance, before the next sea burst,
And caught him as he drifted, seized him, held,
Up-ended him against the bitts, and cursed.
"This ain't the George's Swimming Baths," he yelled;
"Keep on your feet!" Another grey-back felled
The two together, and the Bose, half-blind,

Spat: "One's a joke," he cursed, "but
two's unkind."

"Now, damn it, Dauber!" said the Mate.
"Look out,
Or you'll be over the side!" The water
freed;
Each clanging freeing-port became a spout.
The men cleared up the decks as there was
need.
The Dauber's head was cut, he felt it bleed
Into his oilskins as he clutched and coiled.
Water and sky were devils' brews which
boiled,

Boiled, shrieked, and glowered; but the
ship was saved.
Snugged safely down, though fourteen sails
were split.
Out of the dark a fiercer fury raved.

The grey-backs died and mounted, each crest lit
With a white toppling gleam that hissed from it
And slid, or leaped, or ran with whirls of cloud,
Mad with inhuman life that shrieked aloud.

The watch was called; Dauber might go below.
"Splice the main brace!" the Mate called. All laid aft
To get a gulp of momentary glow
As some reward for having saved the craft.
The steward ladled mugs, from which each quaff'd
Whisky, with water, sugar, and lime-juice, hot,
A quarter of a pint each made the tot.

Beside the lamp-room door the steward stood
Ladling it out, and each man came in turn,
Tipped his sou'-wester, drank it, grunted "Good!"
And shambled forward, letting it slowly burn:
When all were gone the Dauber lagged astern,
Torn by his frozen body's lust for heat,
The liquor's pleasant smell, so warm, so sweet,

And by a promise long since made at home
Never to taste strong liquor. Now he knew
The worth of liquor; now he wanted some.
His frozen body urged him to the brew;
Yet it seemed wrong, an evil thing to do

To break that promise. "Dauber," said
the Mate,
"Drink, and turn in, man; why the hell
d'ye wait?"

"Please, sir, I'm temperance." "Temper-
ance are you, hey?
That's all the more for me! So you're
for slops?
I thought you'd had enough slops for to-
day.
Go to your bunk and ease her when she
drops.
And — damme, steward! you brew with
too much hops!
Stir up the sugar, man! — and tell your girl
How kind the Mate was teaching you to
furl."

Then the Mate drank the remnants, six
men's share,

And ramped into his cabin, where he stripped
And danced unclad, and was uproarious there.
In waltzes with the cabin cat he tripped,
Singing in tenor clear that he was pipped —
That "he who strove the tempest to disarm,
Must never first embrail the lee yardarm,"

And that his name was Ginger. Dauber crept
Back to the round-house, gripping by the rail.
The wind howled by; the passionate water leapt;
The night was all one roaring with the gale.
Then at the door he stopped, uttering a wail;

His hands were perished numb and blue as
veins,
He could not turn the knob for both the
Spains.

A hand came shuffling aft, dodging the seas,
Singing "her nut-brown hair" between his
teeth;
Taking the ocean's tumult at his ease
Even when the wash about his thighs did
seethe.
His soul was happy in its happy sheath;
"What, Dauber, won't it open? Fingers
cold?
You'll talk of this time, Dauber, when
you're old."

He flung the door half open, and a sea
Washed them both in, over the splash-
board, down;

"You silly, salt miscarriage!" sputtered
he.
"Dauber, pull out the plug before we
drown!
That's spoiled my laces and my velvet
gown.
Where is the plug?" Groping in pitch
dark water,
He sang between his teeth "The Farmer's
Daughter."

It was pitch dark within there; at each roll
The chests slid to the slant; the water
rushed,
Making full many a clanging tin pan bowl
Into the black below-bunks as it gushed.
The dog-tired men slept through it; they
were hushed.
The water drained, and then with matches
damp

The man struck heads off till he lit the lamp.

"Thank you," the Dauber said; the sea-
man grinned.
"This is your first foul weather?" "Yes."
"I thought
Up on the yard you hadn't seen much wind.
Them's rotten sea-boots, Dauber, that you
brought.
Now I must cut on deck before I'm
caught."
He went; the lamp-flame smoked; he
slammed the door;
A film of water loitered across the floor.

The Dauber watched it come and watched
it go;
He had had revelation of the lies
Cloaking the truth men never choose to
know;

He could bear witness now and cleanse
their eyes.
He had beheld in suffering; he was wise;
This was the sea, this searcher of the soul —
This never-dying shriek fresh from the
Pole.

He shook with cold; his hands could not
undo
His oilskin buttons, so he shook and sat,
Watching his dirty fingers, dirty blue,
Hearing without the hammering tackle slat,
Within, the drops from dripping clothes
went pat,
Running in little patters, gentle, sweet,
And "Ai, ai!" went the wind, and the
seas beat.

His bunk was sopping wet; he clambered
in.

None of his clothes were dry; his fear
recurred.
Cramps bunched the muscles underneath
his skin.
The great ship rolled until the lamp was
blurred.
He took his Bible and tried to read a word;
Trembled at going aloft again, and then
Resolved to fight it out and show it to
men.

Faces recurred, fierce memories of the yard,
The frozen sail, the savage eyes, the jests,
The oaths of one great seaman, syphilis-
scarred,
The tug of leeches jammed beneath their
chests,
The buntlines bellying bunts out into
breasts.
The deck so desolate-grey, the sky so wild,

He fell asleep, and slept like a young
child.

But not for long; the cold awoke him
soon,
The hot-ache and the skin-cracks and the
cramp,
The seas thundering without, the gale's
wild tune,
The sopping misery of the blankets damp.
A speaking-trumpet roared; a sea-boot's
stamp
Clogged at the door. A man entered to
shout:
"All hands on deck! Arouse here! Tum-
ble out!"

The caller raised the lamp; his oilskins
clicked
As the thin ice upon them cracked and
fell.

"Rouse out!" he said. "This lamp is frozen wick'd.
Rouse out!" His accent deepened to a yell.
"We're among ice; it's blowing up like hell.
We're going to hand both topsails. Time, I guess,
We're sheeted up. Rouse out! Don't stay to dress!"

"Is it cold on deck?" said Dauber. "Is it cold?
We're sheeted up, I tell you, inches thick!
The fo'c'sle's like a wedding-cake, I'm told.
Now tumble out, my sons; on deck here, quick!
Rouse out, away, and come and climb the stick.

I'm going to call the half-deck. Bosun!
Hey!
Both topsails coming in. Heave out!
Away!"

He went; the Dauber tumbled from his
bunk,
Clutching the side. He heard the wind go
past,
Making the great ship wallow as if drunk.
There was a shocking tumult up the mast.
"This is the end," he muttered, "come at
last!
I've got to go aloft, facing this cold.
I can't. I can't. I'll never keep my hold.

"I cannot face the topsail yard again.
I never guessed what misery it would be."
The cramps and hot-ache made him sick
with pain.

The ship stopped suddenly from a devilish
sea,
Then, with a triumph of wash, a rush of
glee,
The door burst in, and in the water rolled,
Filling the lower bunks, black, creaming,
cold.

The lamp sucked out. "Wash!" went
the water back,
Then in again, flooding; the Bosun swore.
"You useless thing! You Dauber! You
lee slack!
Get out, you heekapoota! Shut the door!
You coo-ilyaira, what are you waiting
for?
Out of my way, you thing — you useless
thing!"
He slammed the door indignant, clanging
the ring.

And then he lit the lamp, drowned to the waist;
"Here's a fine house! Get at the scupper-holes" —
He bent against it as the water raced —
"And pull them out to leeward when she rolls.
They say some kinds of landsmen don't have souls.
I well believe. A Port Mahon baboon
Would make more soul than you got with a spoon."

Down in the icy water Dauber groped
To find the plug; the racing water sluiced
Over his head and shoulders as she sloped.
Without, judged by the sound, all hell was loosed.
He felt cold Death about him tightly noosed.

That Death was better than the misery there
Iced on the quaking foothold high in air.

And then the thought came: "I'm a failure. All
My life has been a failure. They were right.
It will not matter if I go and fall;
I should be free then from this hell's delight.
I'll never paint. Best let it end to-night.
I'll slip over the side. I've tried and failed."
So in the ice-cold in the night he quailed.

Death would be better, death, than this long hell
Of mockery and surrender and dismay —
This long defeat of doing nothing well,

Playing the part too high for him to play.

"O Death! who hides the sorry thing away,
Take me; I've failed. I cannot play these cards."
There came a thundering from the topsail yards.

And then he bit his lips, clenching his mind,
And staggered out to muster, beating back
The coward frozen self of him that whined.
Come what cards might he meant to play the pack.
"Ai!" screamed the wind; the topsail sheet went clack;
Ice filled the air with spikes; the grey-backs burst.
"Here's Dauber," said the Mate, "on deck the first.

"Why, holy sailor, Dauber, you're a man!
I took you for a soldier. Up now, come!"
Up on the yards already they began
That battle with a gale which strikes men dumb.
The leaping topsail thundered like a drum.
The frozen snow beat in the face like shots.
The wind spun whipping wave-crests into clots.

So up upon the topsail yard again,
In the great tempest's fiercest hour, began
Probation to the Dauber's soul, of pain
Which crowds a century's torment in a span.
For the next month the ocean taught this man,
And he, in that month's torment, while she wested,
Was never warm nor dry, nor full nor rested.

But still it blew, or, if it lulled, it rose
Within the hour and blew again, and still
The water as it burst aboard her froze.
The wind blew off an ice-field, raw and chill,
Daunting man's body, tampering with his will;
But after thirty days a ghostly sun
Gave sickly promise that the storms were done.

VII

A GREAT grey sea was running up the sky,
Desolate birds flew past; their mewings came
As that lone water's spiritual cry,
Its forlorn voice, its essence, its soul's name.
The ship limped in the water as if lame.
Then in the forenoon watch to a great shout

More sail was made, the reefs were shaken
out.

A slant came from the south; the singers
stood
Clapped to the halliards, hauling to a tune,
Old as the sea, a fillip to the blood.
The upper topsail rose like a balloon.
"So long, Cape Stiff. In Valparaiso
soon,"
Said one to other, as the ship lay over,
Making her course again — again a rover.

Slowly the sea went down as the wind
fell.
Clear rang the songs, "Hurrah! Cape Horn
is bet!"
The combless seas were lumping into swell;
The leaking fo'c'sles were no longer wet.
More sail was made; the watch on deck
was set

To cleaning up the ruin broken bare
Below, aloft, about her, everywhere.

The Dauber, scrubbing out the round-
house, found
Old pantiles pulped among the mouldy
gear,
Washed underneath the bunks and long
since drowned
During the agony of the Cape Horn year.
He sang in scrubbing, for he had done with
fear —
Fronted the worst and looked it in the
face;
He had got manhood at the testing-place.

Singing he scrubbed, passing his watch
below,
Making the round-house fair; the Bosun
watched,

Bringing his knitting slowly to the toe.
Sails stretched a mizen skysail which he patched;
They thought the Dauber was a bad egg hatched.
"Daubs," said the Bosun cheerly, "can you knit?
I've made a Barney's bull of this last bit."

Then, while the Dauber counted, Bosun took
Some marline from his pocket. "Here," he said,
"You want to know square sennit? So fash. Look!
Eight foxes take, and stop the ends with thread.
I've known an engineer would give his head

To know square sennit." As the Bose began,
The Dauber felt promoted into man.

It was his warrant that he had not failed —
That the most hard part in his difficult climb
Had not been past attainment; it was scaled:
Safe footing showed above the slippery slime.
He had emerged out of the iron time,
And knew that he could compass his life's scheme;
He had the power sufficient to his dream.

Then dinner came, and now the sky was blue.
The ship was standing north, the Horn was rounded;

She made a thundering as she weltered
through.
The mighty grey-backs glittered as she
bounded.
More sail was piled upon her; she was
hounded
North, while the wind came; like a stag
she ran
Over grey hills and hollows of seas wan.

She had a white bone in her mouth: she
sped;
Those in the round-house watched her as
they ate
Their meal of pork-fat fried with broken
bread.
"Good old!" they cried. "She's off; she's
gathering gait!"
Her track was whitening like a Lammas
spate.

"Good old!" they cried. "Oh, give her cloth! Hurray!
For three weeks more to Valparaiso Bay!

"She smells old Vallipo," the Bosun cried.
"We'll be inside the tier in three weeks more,
Lying at double-moorings where they ride
Off of the market, half a mile from shore,
And bumboat pan, my sons, and figs galore,
And girls in black mantillas fit to make a
Poor seaman frantic when they dance the cueca."

Eight bells were made, the watch was changed, and now
The Mate spoke to the Dauber: "This is better.
We'll soon be getting mudhooks over the bow.

She'll make her passage still if this'll let
her.
Oh, run, you drogher! dip your fo'c'sle
wetter.
Well, Dauber, this is better than Cape
Horn.
Them topsails made you wish you'd not
been born."

"Yes, sir," the Dauber said. "Now," said
the Mate,
"We've got to smart her up. Them Cape
Horn seas
Have made her paint-work like a rusty grate.
Oh, didn't them topsails make your fish-
hooks freeze?
A topsail don't pay heed to 'Won't you,
please?'
Well, you have seen Cape Horn, my son;
you've learned.

You've dipped your hand and had your
fingers burned.

"And now you'll stow that folly, trying
to paint.
You've had your lesson; you're a sailor
now.
You come on board a female ripe to faint.
All sorts of slush you'd learned, the Lord
knows how.
Cape Horn has sent you wisdom over the
bow
If you've got sense to take it. You're a
sailor.
My God! before you were a woman's tailor.

"So throw your paints to blazes and have
done.
Words can't describe the silly things you
did

Sitting before your easel in the sun,
With all your colours on the paint-box lid.
I blushed for you . . . and then the daubs you hid.
My God! you'll have more sense now, eh? You've quit?"
"No, sir." "You've not?" "No, sir." "God give you wit.

"I thought you'd come to wisdom." Thus they talked,
While the great clipper took her bit and rushed
Like a skin-glistening stallion not yet baulked,
Till fire-bright water at her swing ports gushed;
Poising and bowing down her fore-foot crushed

Bubble on glittering bubble; on she went.
The Dauber watched her, wondering what
it meant.

To come, after long months, at rosy dawn,
Into the placid blue of some great bay.
Treading the quiet water like a fawn
Ere yet the morning haze was blown away.
A rose-flushed figure putting by the grey,
And anchoring there before the city smoke
Rose, or the church-bells rang, or men
awoke.

And then, in the first light, to see grow
clear
That long-expected haven filled with
strangers —
Alive with men and women; see and hear
Its clattering market and its money-
changers;

And hear the surf beat, and be free from dangers,
And watch the crinkled ocean blue with calm
Drowsing beneath the Trade, beneath the palm.

Hungry for that he worked; the hour went by,
And still the wind grew, still the clipper strode,
And now a darkness hid the western sky,
And sprays came flicking off at the wind's goad.
She stumbled now, feeling her sail a load.
The Mate gazed hard to windward, eyed his sail,
And said the Horn was going to flick her tail.

Boldly he kept it on her till she staggered,
But still the wind increased; it grew, it grew,
Darkening the sky, making the water haggard;
Full of small snow the mighty wester blew.
"More fun for little fish-hooks," sighed the crew.
They eyed the taut topgallants stiff like steel;
A second hand was ordered to the wheel.

The Captain eyed her aft, sucking his lip,
Feeling the sail too much, but yet refraining
From putting hobbles on the leaping ship,
The glad sea-shattering stallion, halter-straining,
Wing-musical, uproarious, and complaining;

But, in a gust, he cocked his finger, so:
"You'd better take them off, before they go."

All saw. They ran at once without the word
"Lee-ay! Lee-ay!" Loud rang the clew-line cries;
Sam in his bunk within the half-deck heard,
Stirred in his sleep, and rubbed his drowsy eyes.
"There go the lower to'gallants." Against the skies
Rose the thin bellying strips of leaping sail.
The Dauber was the first man over the rail.

Three to a mast they ran; it was a race.
"God!" said the Mate; "that Dauber, he can go."

He watched the runners with an upturned face
Over the futtocks, struggling heel to toe,
Up to the topmast cross-trees into the blow
Where the three sails were leaping. "Dauber wins!"
The yards were reached, and now the race begins.

Which three will furl their sail first and come down?
Out to the yard-arm for the leech goes one,
His hair blown flagwise from a hatless crown,
His hands at work like fever to be done.
Out of the gale a fiercer fury spun.
The three sails leaped together, yanking high,
Like talons darting up to clutch the sky.

The Dauber on the fore-topgallant yard
Out at the weather yard-arm was the first
To lay his hand upon the buntline-barred
Topgallant yanking to the wester's burst;
He craned to catch the leech; his comrades
cursed;
One at the buntlines, one with oaths
observed,
"The eye of the outer jib-stay isn't
served."

"No," said the Dauber. "No," the man
replied.
They heaved, stowing the sail, not looking
round,
Panting, but full of life and eager-eyed;
The gale roared at them with its iron
sound.
"That's you," the Dauber said. His gas-
ket wound

Swift round the yard, binding the sail in bands;
There came a gust, the sail leaped from his hands,

So that he saw it high above him, grey,
And there his mate was falling; quick he clutched
An arm in oilskins swiftly snatched away.
A voice said "Christ!" a quick shape stooped and touched,
Chain struck his hands, ropes shot, the sky was smutched
With vast black fires that ran, that fell, that furled,
And then he saw the mast, the small snow hurled,

The fore-topgallant yard far, far aloft,
And blankness settling on him and great pain;

And snow beneath his fingers wet and soft,
And topsail sheet-blocks shaking at the chain.
He knew it was he who had fallen; then his brain
Swirled in a circle while he watched the sky.
Infinite multitudes of snow blew by.

"I thought it was Tom who fell," his brain's voice said.
"Down on the bloody deck!" the Captain screamed.
The multitudinous little snow-flakes sped.
His pain was real enough, but all else seemed.
Si with a bucket ran, the water gleamed
Tilting upon him; others came, the Mate . . .
They knelt with eager eyes like things that wait

For other things to come. He saw them there.

"It will go on," he murmured, watching Si.

Colours and sounds seemed mixing in the air,

The pain was stunning him, and the wind went by.

"More water," said the Mate. "Here, Bosun, try.

Ask if he's got a message. Hell, he's gone!

Here, Dauber, paints." He said, "It will go on."

Not knowing his meaning rightly, but he spoke

With the intenseness of a fading soul

Whose share of Nature's fire turns to smoke,

Whose hand on Nature's wheel loses control.

The eager faces glowered red like coal.

They glowed, the great storm glowed, the sails, the mast.
"It will go on," he cried aloud, and passed.

Those from the yard came down to tell the tale.
"He almost had me off," said Tom. "He slipped.
There come one hell of a jump-like from the sail. . . .
He clutched at me and almost had me pipped.
He caught my 'ris'band, but the oilskin ripped. . . .
It tore clean off. Look here. I was near gone.
I made a grab to catch him; so did John.

"I caught his arm. My God! I was near done.

He almost had me over; it was near.
He hit the ropes and grabbed at every one."
"Well," said the Mate, "we cannot leave
him here.
Run, Si, and get the half-deck table clear.
We'll lay him there. Catch hold there,
you, and you,
He's dead, poor son; there's nothing more
to do."

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber
lay
Covered upon the table; all night long
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.
But to the covered shape she did no wrong.
He lay beneath the sailcloth. Bell by
bell
The night wore through; the stars rose,
the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear sky
The wind roared all night long; and all
night through
The green seas on the deck went washing by,
Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.
But little of it all the Dauber knew —
The sopping bunks, the floating chests,
the wet,
The darkness, and the misery, and the
sweat.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,
And when the watches changed the men
would come
Dripping within the door to strike a light
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,
And say, "He come a cruel thump, poor
chum."
Or, "He'd a-been a fine big man;" or,
"He . . .

A smart young seaman he was getting to
be."

Or, "Damn it all, it's what we've all to
face! . .
I knew another fellow one time . . ." then
Came a strange tale of death in a strange
place
Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering
men.
In many ways Death puts us into pen.
The reefers came down tired and looked
and slept.
Below the skylight little dribbles crept

Along the painted woodwork, glistening,
slow,
Following the roll and dripping, never fast,
But dripping on the quiet form below,
Like passing time talking to time long past.

And all night long "Ai, ai!" went the wind's
blast,
And creaming water swished below the
pale,
Unheeding body stretched beneath the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight
bells
They bore him to the gangway, wading
deep,
Through the green-clutching, white-toothed
water-hells
That flung his carriers over in their sweep.
They laid an old red ensign on the heap,
And all hands stood bare-headed, stooping,
swaying,
Washed by the sea while the old man was
praying

Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a sign

They twitched the ensign back and tipped
the grating
A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling
brine.
The muffled figure tilted to the weight-
ing;
It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating.
Some craned to see; it dimmed, it disap-
peared;
The last green milky bubble blinked and
cleared.

"Mister, shake out your reefs," the Cap-
tain called.
"Out topsail reefs!" the Mate cried; then
all hands
Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands
hauled,
Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,
Of how a lover came in dripping bands,

Green with the wet and cold, to tell his lover
That Death was in the sea, and all was over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman said
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again
The clipper held her course, showing red lead,
Shattering the sea-tops into golden rain.
The waves bowed down before her like blown grain;
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage was short,
Before the tier's bells rang her into port.

Cheerly they rang her in, those beating bells,
The new-come beauty stately from the sea,
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy swells,

Treading the bubbles down. With three
times three
They cheered her moving beauty in, and
she
Came to her berth so noble, so superb;
Swayed like a queen, and answered to the
curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft,
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour,
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,
And beauty in the heart breaks like a flower.
Working aloft they saw the mountain
tower,
Snow to the peak; they heard the launch-
men shout;
And bright along the bay the lights came
out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night
long

The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,
Frozen, alert, austere; the eagle's song
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.
On her intense crags where the air is sparse
The stars looked down; their many golden eyes
Watched her and burned, burned out, and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose.
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall; the stones falling
Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.

EXPLANATIONS OF SOME OF THE SEA TERMS USED IN THE POEM

Backstays. Wire ropes which support the masts against lateral and after strains.

Barney's bull. A figure in marine proverb. A jewel in marine repartee.

Bells. Two bells (one forward, one aft) which are struck every half-hour in a certain manner to mark the passage of the watches.

Bitts. Strong wooden structures (built round each mast) upon which running rigging is secured.

Block. A sheaved pulley.

Boatswain. A supernumerary or idler, generally attached to the mate's watch, and holding considerable authority over the crew.

Bouilli tin. Any tin that contains, or has contained, preserved meat.

Bows. The forward extremity of a ship.

Brace-blocks. Pulleys through which the braces travel.

Braces. Ropes by which the yards are inclined forward or aft.

Bumboat pan. Soft bread sold by the bumboat man, a kind of sea costermonger who trades with ships in port.

Bunt. Those cloths of a square sail which are nearest to the mast when the sail is set. The central portion of a furled square sail. The human abdomen (figuratively).

Buntlines. Ropes which help to confine square sails to the yards in the operation of furling.

Chocks. Wooden stands on which the boats rest.

Cleats. Iron or wooden contrivances to which ropes may be secured.

Clew-lines. Ropes by which the lower corners of square sails are lifted.

Clews. The lower corners of square sails.

Clipper. A title of honour given to ships of more than usual speed and beauty.

Coaming. The raised rim of a hatchway; a barrier at a doorway to keep water from entering.

Courses. The large square sails set upon the lower yards of sailing ships. The mizen course is called the "crojick."

Cringled. Fitted with iron rings or cringles, many of which are let into sails or sail-roping for various purposes.

Crojick (or cross-jack). A square sail set upon the lower yard of the mizen mast.

Dungarees. Thin blue or khaki-coloured overalls made from cocoanut fibre.

Fairleads. Rings of wood or iron by means of which running rigging is led in any direction.

Fife-rails. Strong wooden shelves fitted with iron pins, to which ropes may be secured.

Fish-hooks. *I.e.*, fingers.

Foot-ropes. Ropes on which men stand when working aloft.

Fo'c'sle. The cabin or cabins in which the men are berthed. It is usually an iron deck-house divided through the middle into two compartments for the two watches, and fitted with wooden bunks.

Sometimes it is even fitted with lockers and an iron water-tank.

Foxes. Strands, yarns, or arrangements of yarns of rope.

Freeing-ports. Iron doors in the ship's side which open outwards to free the decks of water.

Frap. To wrap round with rope.

Futtock-shrouds. Iron bars to which the topmast rigging is secured. As they project outward and upward from the masts they are difficult to clamber over.

Galley. The ship's kitchen.

Gantline (girtline). A rope used for the sending of sails up and down from aloft.

Gaskets. Ropes by which the sails are secured in furling.

Half-deck. A cabin or apartment in which the apprentices are berthed. Its situation is usually the ship's waist; but it is sometimes further aft, and occasionally it is under the poop or even right forward under the top-gallant fo'c'sle.

Halliards. Ropes by which sails are hoisted.

Harness-room. An office or room from which the salt meat is issued, and in which it is sometimes stored.

Hawse. The bows or forward end of a ship.

Head. The forward part of a ship. That upper edge of a square sail which is attached to the yard.

House-flag. The special flag of the firm to which a ship belongs.

Idlers. The members of the round-house mess, generally consisting of the carpenter, cook, sailmaker, boatswain, painter, etc., are known as the idlers.

Jack (or jackstay). An iron bar (fitted along all yards in sailing ships) to which the head of a square sail is secured when bent.

Kites. Light upper sails.

Leeches. The outer edges of square sails. In furling some square sails the leech is dragged inwards till it lies level with the head upon the surface of the yard. This is done by the first man who gets upon the yard, beginning at the weather side.

Logship. A contrivance by which a ship's speed is measured.

Lower topsail. The second sail from the deck on square rigged masts. It is a very strong, important sail.

Marline. Tarry line or coarse string made of rope-yarns twisted together.

Mate. The First or Chief Mate is generally called the Mate.

Mizen-topmast-head. The summit of the second of the three or four spars which make the complete mizen-mast.

Mudhooks. Anchors.

Pins. Iron or wooden bars to which running rigging is secured.

Pointing. A kind of neat plait with which ropes are sometimes ended off or decorated.

Poop-break. The forward end of the after superstructure.

Ratlines. The rope steps placed across the shrouds to enable the seamen to go aloft.

Reefers. Apprentices.

Reef-points. Ropes by which the area of some sails may be reduced in the operation of reefing. Reef-points are securely fixed to the sails fitted with

them, and when not in use their ends patter continually upon the canvas with a gentle drumming noise.

Reel. A part of the machinery used with a logship.

Round-house. A cabin (of all shapes except round) in which the idlers are berthed.

Royals. Light upper square sails; the fourth, fifth, or sixth sails from the deck according to the mast's rig.

Sail-room. A large room or compartment in which the ship's sails are stored.

" Sails." The sailmaker is meant.

Scuttle-butt. A cask containing fresh water.

Shackles. Rope handles for a sea-chest.

Sheet-blocks. Iron blocks, by means of which sails are sheeted home. In any violent wind they beat upon the mast with great rapidity and force.

Sheets. Ropes or chains which extend the lower corners of square sails in the operation of sheeting home.

Shifting suits (of sails). The operation of removing a ship's sails, and replacing them with others.

Shrouds. Wire ropes of great strength, which support lateral strains on masts.

Shroud-screws. Iron contrivances by which shrouds are hove taut.

Sidelights. A sailing ship carries two of these between sunset and sunrise: one green, to starboard; one red, to port.

Sights. Observations to help in the finding of a ship's position.

Skid. A wooden contrivance on which ship's boats rest.

Skysails. The uppermost square sails; the fifth, sixth, or seventh sails from the deck according to the mast's rig.

Slatting. The noise made by sails flogging in the wind.

Slush. Grease, melted fat.

South-wester. A kind of oilskin hat. A gale from the south-west.

Spit brown. To chew tobacco.

Square sennit. A cunning plait which makes a four-square bar.

Staysails. Fore and aft sails set upon the stays between the masts.

Stow. To furl.

Strop (the, putting on). A strop is a grument or rope ring. The two players kneel down facing each other, the strop is placed over their heads, and the men then try to pull each other over by the strength of their neck-muscles.

Swing ports. Iron doors in the ship's side which open outwards to free the decks from water.

Tackle (pronounced "taykel"). Blocks, ropes, pulleys, etc.

Take a caulk. To sleep upon the deck.

Topsails. The second and third sails from the deck on the masts of a modern square-rigged ship are known as the lower and upper topsails.

Trucks. The summits of the masts.

Upper topsail. The third square sail from the deck on the masts of square-rigged ships.

Yards. The steel or wooden spars (placed across masts) from which square sails are set.

BIOGRAPHY

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon Time,

Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth,
Those moments of the soul in years of earth
They mark the height achieved, the main result,
The power of freedom in the perished cult,
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds,
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

By many waters and on many ways
I have known golden instants and bright days;
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;
The summer day on which in heart's delight
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags

And the ship *Wanderer* came with sails in rags;
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk
When life became more splendid than its husk,
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists
Broke to display the four Evangelists,
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,

Wind-beaten bones of long since buried
acres;
The night alone near water when I heard
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;
The English dusk when I beheld once more
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citied
shore,
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly
trod
(In happier seasons) and gave thanks to
God.
All had their beauty, their bright moments'
gift,
Their something caught from Time, the
ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's
hands
Have given more constant gifts in changing
lands,

And when I count those gifts, I think them such
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:
The gift of country life, near hills and woods
Where happy waters sing in solitudes,
The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day
A city of ships with great ships under weigh,
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping,
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know
Those water-trampling ships which made me glow,

But think my wonder mad and fail to find
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,
And yet they made me:
not alone the ships
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,
The two close friends of nearly twenty years,
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolt-head bright
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold
And who'll know what one said and what one told
Our hearts' communion and the broken spells

When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?
No one, I know, yet let me be believed
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word
Live in the soul to make the being stirred,
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
Away from all bright water and great hills
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills,
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
But dead museums and miles of misery
And floating life unrooted from man's need
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed
And life made wretched out of human ken

And miles of shopping women served by men.
So, if the penman sums my London days
Let him but say that there were holy ways,
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old
With stinking doors where women stood to scold
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads shining
And that old carol of the midnight whining,
And that old room (above the noisy slum)
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and
those friends,
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends
That all may be imagined from the flash
The cloud-hid god-game through the light-
ning gash
Those hours of stricken sparks from which
men took
Light to send out to men in song or
book.
Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells
strike two
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew.
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's
best,
The thought beyond great poets not ex-
pressed,
The glory of mood where human frailty
failed,
The forts of human light not yet assailed,

Till the dim room had mind and seemed to brood
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood,
Till we became a college, and each night
Was discipline and manhood and delight,
Till our farewells and winding down the stairs
At each grey dawn had meaning that Time spares,
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again
And see the alley glimmering in the rain,

Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,
The secret house where once a beggar stood
Trembling and blind to show his woe for food.
And now I miss that friend who used to walk
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,
Wearing the last of night out in still streets
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats
And cats, but else deserted; now I miss
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his
And that strange way he had of making gleam,
Like something real, the art we used to dream.

London has been my prison; but my books
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,
Ships and deep friendships and remembered days
Which even now set all my mind ablaze
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks
And felt the hillside haunted even then
By not dead memory of the Roman men.
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen
Who knew the interest in me and were keen
That man alive should understand man dead
So many centuries since the blood was shed.
And quickened with strange hush because this comer

Sensed a strange soul alive behind the
summer.
That other day on Ercall when the stones
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied
bones,
While the bees droned and all the air was
sweet
From honey buried underneath my feet,
Honey of purple heather and white clover
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's
over.
Then other days by water, by bright sea,
Clear as clean glass and my bright friend
with me,
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the
brown
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet
down
And saw the long fronds waving, white
with shells,

Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;
That sadder day when we beheld the great
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps gleamed
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.
That sadder day when we beheld again
A spate going down in sunshine after rain,
When the blue reach of water leaping bright
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white.
And that far day, that never blotted page

When youth was bright like flowers about old age
Fair generations bringing thanks for life
To that old kindly man and trembling wife
After their sixty years: Time never made
A better beauty since the Earth was laid
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise,
The day they led my cutter at the turn
Yet could not keep the lead and dropped astern,
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars
Dipped in each other's wash and throats grew hoarse

And teeth ground into teeth and both strokes quickened

Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened

And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,

To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke

And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,

The tide a mill race we were struggling through

And every quick recover gave us squints

Of them still there, and oar tossed water-glints

And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,

A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing—

"Port Fore!" and "Starboard Fore!"

"Port Fore." "Port Fore."

"Up with her, Starboard," and at that each
oar
Lightened, though arms were bursting, and
eyes shut
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut
And the curse quickened from the cox, our
bows
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made
vows
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain
We numbered things we'd never eat again
If we could only win; then came the yell
"Starboard," "Port Fore," and then a
beaten bell
Rung as for fire to cheer us. "Now."
Oars bent
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was
spent,
"Damn it, come on now," "On now,"
"On now," "Starboard."

"Port Fore." "Up with her, Port"; each cutter harboured
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, "Heave, oh, heave,"
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.
"Heave," and I saw a back, then two. "Port Fore."
"Starboard." "Come on." I saw the mid-ship oar
And knew we had done them. "Port Fore."
"Starboard." "Now."
I saw bright water spurting at their bow
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed great:
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath
Between the advancing grave and breaking death,
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth,
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving, pawling;
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.

Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like ice,
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch.
Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill.
Delights of work most real, delights that change
The headache life of towns to rapture strange
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health
That puts new glory upon mental wealth
And makes the poor man rich.
But that ends, too,
Health with its thoughts of life; and that bright view

That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,
And all a glad man's comments on life's story
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men
And what pens tell and all beyond the pen
End, and are summed in words so truly dead
They raise no image of the heart and head,
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,
The mind ours argued with or listened to,
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,
Is dead as print before the funeral,
Even deader after, when the dates are sought,
And cold minds disagree with what we thought.
This many pictured world of many passions

Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,
And what life is is much to very few,
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do
So good to watch or share; but when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount,
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments, each bright time
Opening to show the city white like lime,
High towered and many peopled. This made sure,
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,
Making our not-returning time of breath

Dull with the ritual and records of death,
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,
And gives his work compassion and new eyes.
The days that make us happy make us wise.

CARGOES

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant
Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white
wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the
Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-
green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked
smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad
March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

SEA FEVER

I MUST go down to the seas again, to the
lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to
steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song
and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a
grey dawn breaking,

I must go down to the seas again, for the
call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not
be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white
clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume,
and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the
vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way
where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laugh-
ing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when
the long trick's over.

SPANISH WATERS

Spanish waters, Spanish waters, you are ringing in my ears,
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the grey forgotten years;
Telling tales, and beating tunes, and bringing weary thoughts to me
Of the sandy beach at Muertos, where I would that I could be.

There's a surf breaks on Los Muertos, and it never stops to roar,
And it's there we came to anchor, and it's there we went ashore,
Where the blue lagoon is silent amid snags of rotting trees,
Dropping like the clothes of corpses cast up by the seas.

We anchored at Los Muertos when the dipping sun was red,
We left her half-a-mile to sea, to west of Nigger Head;
And before the mist was on the Cay, before the day was done,
We were all ashore on Muertos with the gold that we had won.

We bore it through the marshes in a half-score battered chests,
Sinking, in the sucking quagmires, to the sunburn on our breasts,
Heaving over tree-trunks, gasping, damning at the flies and heat,
Longing for a long drink, out of silver, in the ship's cool lazareet.

The moon came white and ghostly as we laid the treasure down,

There was gear there'd make a beggarman
as rich as Lima Town,
Copper charms and silver trinkets from the
chests of Spanish crews,
Gold doubloons and double moydores, louis
d'ors and portagues,

Clumsy yellow-metal earrings from the
Indians of Brazil,
Uncut emeralds out of Rio, bezoar stones
from Guayaquil;
Silver, in the crude and fashioned, pots of
old Arica bronze,
Jewels from the bones of Incas desecrated
by the Dons.

We smoothed the place with mattocks, and
we took and blazed the tree,
Which marks yon where the gear is hid that
none will ever see,

And we laid aboard the ship again, and
south away we steers,
Through the loud surf of Los Muertos
which is beating in my ears.

I'm the last alive that knows it. All the
rest have gone their ways
Killed, or died, or come to anchor in the old
Mulatas Cays,
And I go singing, fiddling, old and starved
and in despair,
And I know where all that gold is hid, if I
were only there.

It's not the way to end it all. I'm old,
and nearly blind,
And an old man's past's a strange thing,
for it never leaves his mind.
And I see in dreams, awhiles, the beach,
the sun's disc dipping red,

And the tall ship, under topsails, swaying
in past Nigger Head.

I'd be glad to step ashore there. Glad to
take a pick and go
To the lone blazed coco-palm tree in the
place no others know,
And lift the gold and silver that has
mouldered there for years
By the loud surf of Los Muertos which is
beating in my ears.

AN OLD SONG RE-SUNG

I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing,
With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in her hold;
And a bosun in a blue coat bawling at the railing,
Piping through a silver call that had a chain of gold;
The summer wind was failing and the tall ship rolled.

I saw a ship a-steering, a-steering, a-steering,
With roses in red thread worked upon her sails;
With sacks of purple amethysts, the spoils of buccaneering,

Skins of musky yellow wine, and silks in bales,
Her merry men were cheering, hauling on the brails.

I saw a ship a-sinking, a-sinking, a-sinking,
With glittering sea-water splashing on her decks,
With seamen in her spirit-room singing songs and drinking,
Pulling claret bottles down, and knocking off the necks,
The broken glass was chinking as she sank among the wrecks.

THE WEST WIND

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of
birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in
my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old
brown hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as
tired as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's
like wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men
may lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting
from the nest.

"Will you not come home, brother? You
have been long away.
It's April, and blossom time, and white is
the spray:
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is
the rain,
Will you not come home, brother, home to
us again?

The young corn is green, brother, where the
rabbits run;
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm
rain and sun.
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a
man's brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry
spring again.

Larks are singing in the west, brother,
above the green wheat,

So will you not come home, brother, and
rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep
for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of
birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I
must tread
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest
for heart and head,
To the violets and the brown brooks and
the thrushes' song
In the fine land, the west land, the land
where I belong.

ON MALVERN HILL

A wind is brushing down the clover,
It sweeps the tossing branches bare,
Blowing the poising kestrel over
The crumbling ramparts of the Caer.

It whirls the scattered leaves before us
Along the dusty road to home,
Once it awakened into chorus
The heart-strings in the ranks of Rome.

There by the gusty coppice border
The shrilling trumpets broke the halt,
The Roman line, the Roman order,
Swayed forwards to the blind assault.

Spearman and charioteer and bowman
Charged and were scattered into spray,
Savage and taciturn the Roman
Hewed upwards in the Roman way.

There — in the twilight — where the cattle
Are lowing home across the fields,
The beaten warriors left the battle
Dead on the clansmen's wicker shields.

The leaves whirl in the wind's riot
Beneath the Beacon's jutting spur,
Quiet are clan and chief, and quiet
Centurion and signifer.

FRAGMENTS

Troy Town is covered up with weeds,
The rabbits and the pismires brood
On broken gold, and shards, and beads
Where Priam's ancient palace stood.

The floors of many a gallant house
Are matted with the roots of grass;
The glow-worm and the nimble mouse
Among her ruins flit and pass.

And there, in orts of blackened bone,
The widowed Trojan beauties lie,
And Simois babbles over stone
And waps and gurgles to the sky.

Once there were merry days in Troy,
Her chimneys smoked with cooking meals,
The passing chariots did annoy
The sunning housewives at their wheels.

And many a lovely Trojan maid
  Set Trojan lads to lovely things;
The game of life was nobly played,
  They played the game like Queens and
    Kings.

So that, when Troy had greatly passed
  In one red roaring fiery coal,
The courts the Grecians overcast
  Became a city in the soul.

In some green island of the sea,
  Where now the shadowy coral grows
In pride and pomp and empery
  The courts of old Atlantis rose.

In many a glittering house of glass
  The Atlanteans wandered there;
The paleness of their faces was
  Like ivory, so pale they were.

And hushed they were, no noise of words
In those bright cities ever rang;
Only their thoughts, like golden birds,
About their chambers thrilled and sang.

They knew all wisdom, for they knew
The souls of those Egyptian Kings
Who learned, in ancient Babilu,
The beauty of immortal things.

They knew all beauty — when they thought
The air chimed like a stricken lyre,
The elemental birds were wrought,
The golden birds became a fire.

And straight to busy camps and marts
The singing flames were swiftly gone;
The trembling leaves of human hearts
Hid boughs for them to perch upon.

And men in desert places, men
Abandoned, broken, sick with fears,

Rose singing, swung their swords agen,
And laughed and died among the spears.

The green and greedy seas have drowned
That city's glittering walls and towers,
Her sunken minarets are crowned
With red and russet water-flowers.

In towers and rooms and golden courts
The shadowy coral lifts her sprays;
The scrawl hath gorged her broken orts,
The shark doth haunt her hidden ways.

But, at the falling of the tide,
The golden birds still sing and gleam,
The Atlanteans have not died,
Immortal things still give us dream.

The dream that fires man's heart to make,
To build, to do, to sing or say
A beauty Death can never take,
An Adam from the crumbled clay.

TEWKESBURY ROAD

It is good to be out on the road, and going
one knows not where,
Going through meadow and village, one
knows not whither nor why;
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in
the keen cool rush of the air,
Under the flying white clouds, and the
broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the
tall green fern at the brink
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse,
and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shy-eyed delicate deer troop
down to the brook to drink
When the stars are mellow and large at
the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy past power of words;
And the blessed green comely meadows are all a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear wild cry of the birds.

SONNETS

Men are made human by the mighty fall
The mighty passion led to, these remain.
The despot, at the last assaulted wall,
By long disaster is made man again,
The faithful fool who follows the torn flag,
The woman marching by the beaten man,
Make with their truth atonement for the brag,
And earn a pity for the too proud plan.
For in disaster, in the ruined will,
In the soiled shreds of what the brain conceived,
Something above the wreck is steady still,
Bright above all that cannot be retrieved,
Grandeur of soul, a touching of the star
That good days cover but by which we are.

Ah, we are neither heaven nor earth, but men;
Something that uses and despises both,
That takes its earth's contentment in the pen,
Then sees the world's injustice and is wroth,
And flinging off youth's happy promise, flies
Up to some breach, despising earthly things,
And, in contempt of hell and heaven, dies,
Rather than bear some yoke of priests or kings.
Our joys are not of heaven nor earth, but man's,
A woman's beauty or a child's delight,
The trembling blood when the discoverer scans
The sought-for world, the guessed-at satellite;
The ringing scene, the stone at point to blush
For unborn men to look at and say "Hush."

They took the bloody body from the cross,
They laid it in its niche and rolled the stone.
One said, "Our blessed Master," one "His loss
Ends us companions, we are left alone."
And one, "I thought that Pilate would acquit
Right to the last;" and one, "The sergeant took
The trenching mall and drove the nails with it."
One who was weeping went apart and shook.
Then one, "He promised that in three short days
He would return, oh God; but He is dead."
And one, "What was it that He meant to raise?
The Temple? No? What was it that He said?
He said that He would build? That He would rise?"
"No," answered one, "but come from Paradise.

"Come to us fiery with the saints of God
To judge the world and take His power and
reign."
Then one. "This was the very road we trod
That April day, would it could come again;
The day they flung the flowers." "Let be,"
said one,
"He was a lovely soul, but what He meant
Passes our wit, for none among us, none,
Had brains enough to fathom His intent.
His mother did not, nor could one of us,
But while He spoke I felt I understood."
And one, "He knew that it would finish thus.
Let His thought be, I know that He was good.
There is the orchard, see, the very same
Where we were sleeping when the soldiers
came."

So from the cruel cross they buried God;
So, in their desolation, as they went
They dug him deeper with each step they trod,
Their lightless minds distorting what He meant.
Lamenting Him, their leader, who had died,
They heaped the stones, they rolled the heavy door;
They said, "Our glory has been crucified,
Unless He rise our glory will be o'er."
While in the grave the spirit left the corpse
Broken by torture, slowly, line by line,
And saw the dawn come on the eastern thorpes,
And shook his wings and sang in the divine,
Crying "I told the truth, even unto death,
Though I was earth and now am only breath."

AUGUST 1914

How still this quiet cornfield is to-night;
By an intenser glow the evening falls,
Bringing, not darkness, but a deeper light;
Among the stooks a partridge covey calls.

The windows glitter on the distant hill;
Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold
Stumble on sudden music and are still;
The forlorn pine woods droop above the wold.

An endless quiet valley reaches out
Past the blue hills into the evening sky;
Over the stubble, cawing, goes a rout
Of rooks from harvest, flagging as they fly.

So beautiful it is I never saw
So great a beauty on these English fields

Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields. . . .

These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things, past speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,
Heard, as we hear, the rumors and alarms
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh.

And knew, as we know, that the message meant
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,

Death, like a miser getting in his rent,
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends.

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls.

Yet heard the news, and went discouraged home,
And brooded by the fire with heavy mind,
With such dumb loving of the Berkshire loam
As breaks the dumb hearts of the English kind,

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more
The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,
Nor the dear outline of the English shore,

But knew the misery of the soaking trench,
The freezing in the rigging, the despair
In the revolting second of the wrench
When the blind soul is flung upon the air,

And died (uncouthly, most) in foreign lands
For some idea but dimly understood
Of an English city never built by hands,
Which love of England prompted and made good. . . .

If there be any life beyond the grave,
It must be near the men and things we love,
Some power of quick suggestion how to save,
Touching the living soul as from above.

An influence from the Earth from those dead hearts
So passionate once, so deep, so truly kind,
That in the living child the spirit starts,
Feeling companioned still, not left behind.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods,
A sense of many watchers muttering near,
Of the lone Downland with the forlorn woods
Loved to the death, inestimably dear.

A muttering from beyond the veils of Death
From long-dead men, to whom this quiet scene
Came among blinding tears with the last breath,
The dying soldier's vision of his queen.

All the unspoken worship of those lives
Spent in forgotten wars at other calls
Glimmers upon these fields where evening drives
Beauty like breath, so gently darkness falls.

Darkness that makes the meadows holier still,
The elm trees sadden in the hedge, a sigh

Moves in the beech clump on the haunted
hill,
The rising planets deepen in the sky,

And silence broods like spirit on the brae,
A glimmering moon begins, the moonlight
runs
Over the grasses of the ancient way
Rutted this morning by the passing guns.

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